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A VOYAGE TO THE CAPE

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BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF "AN OCEAN FREELANCE," "THE WRECK OF THE 'GROSVENOR,'" "ROUND THE GALLEY FIRE," "ON THE FO'K'SLE HEAD," ETC.

"In the whole narrative I can scarcely promise you one adventure, as my account is rather of what I saw than what I did."—*Vicar of Wakefield*

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London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1886

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TO MY WIFE.

PREFACE.

THE following chapters are reprinted from the London *Daily Telegraph;* but there is much more of them in this collected form than room could be found for in that journal. At least a third, therefore, of the contents of the book sees the light for the first time. I made the voyage for my health, and embarked, as may be supposed, in no temper for literature. The utmost proposed was a sketch or two. But when, feeling better, I came to look into the inner life of the ship, there was so much to interest me that I could not but believe a description of the passage out and home, with references to the coastwise trip, might yield a little light pleasure to readers fond of the sea or who have journeyed by it. A few notes have been added, for the papers which form the volume were most of them dictated at sea, and I have therefore put at the bottom of the pages matter which should have been embodied in the text had books been within reach.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	To Plymouth	1
II.	To Madeira	14
III.	Heading South	27
IV.	The Master's Responsibilities	39
V.	Boats and Stores	54
VI.	Passed the Canaries	72
VII.	The Barque "Perthshire"	93
VIII.	New Year's Eve at Sea	105
IX.	In the South Atlantic	120
X.	Missing!	135
XI.	An Australian's Yarn	144
XII.	'Longshore Twisters	155
XIII.	To Table Bay	167
XIV.	Table Bay	181
XV.	Cape Town	197
XVI.	An Important Undertaking	212
XVII.	Coastwise to Algoa Bay	229
XVIII.	To East London	245
XIX.	Shipwreck: its Tragedies and Comedies	259
XX.	To Mossel Bay	272
XXI.	Homeward Bound	286
XXII.	"It acted like a Charm"	302
XXIII.	A Chat with the Mate	316
XXIV.	The Phantom Ship	331
XXV.	Home!	

A VOYAGE TO THE CAPE.

CHAPTER I.

TO PLYMOUTH.

THERE are in these days few spectacles more familiar than the great ocean steamship. She is seen light, towering, picturesque, lying alongside the wharves of the docks. Her long, vast fabric is witnessed cautiously steaming down the river through the multitudinous craft that obstruct the navigation; or, dwarfed indeed by distance, but nevertheless satisfying the eye with a sense of commanding and dominating proportions, she may be viewed from the sea-coast at very nearly the distance of the horizon, stretching her black length along with the white water flashing at her stem, rows of scuttles brilliantly burning to the blaze of the noontide sun, white awnings casting violet-tinted shadows upon decks in whose pleasant twilight you may, through the glass, witness the gleam of uniform buttons, the colours of feminine apparel, the fiery sparkle of polished brass under a beam of sunshine that penetrates an aperture of the cool covering. The sight is familiar; hundreds and thousands of persons are annually making the passage of the great oceans in such vessels; they are

noted with interest and admiration from many points of the English sea-coast; excellently drawn and well-engraved pictures of them are constantly published in the illustrated journals. But what of their inner life? What of the mysteries of the engine-room, of the discipline of the crew, of the cares and duties of the captain, of the provisioning of such ships, built to carry some hundreds of souls, who must be dealt with and fed, as though there were provision-markets on either beam to fill up the vessel's larders from at noon every day when the captain makes eight bells? What of the life-saving appliances? Of the manœuvres under various conditions of weather according to the master's judgment?

A man takes his passage in a steamer, he pays his money and embarks. The journey may last eight days, three weeks, a month and a half. Enough for him if he be duly landed with no bitterer memories than such as the first days of sea-sickness yield; he may, indeed, have shown some interest in the daily runs, but as a rule he stops short at that; enough for him, I say, that breakfast, lunch, and dinner are punctually served, that the food is well cooked and hospitably abundant. Walking the deck, blowing tobacco clouds in the smoking-room, "chaffing," telling stories, lounging in the saloon, flirting, grumbling, and the like, complete a routine that at the expiration of the voyage dismisses him from the ship with a mind empty of every point of interest deserving of attention in a structure illustrating one of the highest achievements of human skill, energy, and foresight.

I cannot but think that there must be many readers who would be glad to see deeper into the life of an ocean steamer than is commonly permitted to them in the contributions of those who relate their seafaring ex-

periences; and, this being my impression, I propose to give an account of a voyage I lately made to the Cape of Good Hope, taking the steamers I sailed in as typical of the many powerful iron sea palaces now afloat. The picture, I think, will in the main be found true of most passenger vessels. Discipline of course varies; in the minuter details there may be differences; but of any one great ocean steamer, the cares of the captain, the duties and anxieties of the steward, the work of the engine-room, the victualling of the big structure, must in nearly all essentials correspond with those of the steamships of the principal great passenger lines.

It was a bittterly cold December morning at Southampton. I stood at one of the windows of the South-Western Hotel—a very spacious, comfortable, and liberally administered house—straining my eyes to penetrate the thickness that since four o'clock in the morning had been boiling down and over Southampton and her wide tract of waters. Now and again the phantasm of a little coaster, of a small steamer, or a cutter with her mainsail hoisted would loom out through a flaw in the smother, and vanish again like a reflection upon a looking-glass when you breathe upon it. The vessel in which I had taken my passage to the Cape was a three-masted schooner-rigged steamship, with a displacement of eight thousand tons, and a gross burden of four thousand three hundred tons. Her name was the *Tartar*.* In 1812, when the Yankees were fighting Great Britain, they had an armed schooner that was used as a privateer, of over four hundred tons registered burden; she was an immense vessel then for that rig, she would still be a very large vessel in this age, as a fore-and-aft

* Belonging to the Union Steamship Company.

sailing-craft;* yet here was I bound to the Cape of Good Hope in a schooner with a gross tonnage of four thousand three hundred! But steam makes all the difference between then and now; and when Captain Travers, commander of the *Tartar*, afterwards told me that he had sent down his square yards and left them ashore as useless to the vessel, I could not help thinking, when I stood looking up at the absurd display of shoulder of mutton sails the steamer expanded to the wind whenever it came a point free, that, if the powerful steam sheers in the Southampton Docks had hoisted the iron poles out of the ship and placed them alongside her yards, she would have managed very well, though the nautical eye might indeed have found something wanting.

The misgivings I had felt at the hotel were increased when I boarded the tender that was to convey us bag and baggage to the steamer. Certainly I did not relish the notion of getting under weigh in a fog so thick that objects were undiscernible at a ship's length, and sneaking in it through the dangerous navigation of the Needles with the shadow of the early English December night already in the air. "Anything but a fog," cries the sailor, "when lights are obscured, objects ashore hidden, and when the most experienced attention is almost paralyzed by the conflict of whistles and steam horns and sirens in all imaginable keys!"

A man may pass a happier time than sitting on the deck of a tender in bitter cold weather, in an atmosphere charged with the drizzle of a white fog, waiting to be carried to a ship. The quay-side was crowded with

* The *Mammoth* privateer schooner was 406 tons. The Yankees had two brigs on Lake Ontario, the *Jones* and the *Jefferson*, each 530 tons. Their schooners, *Sylph* and *Triconderoga*, were each 400 tons. These figures are Old Measurement; the vessels would consequently be larger if measured by the present rules.

labourers, officials, policemen, and others, many of them in a state of excitement and shouting at the top of their voices; various sorts of people single or in groups: Dutchmen with flat faces and vacant eyes, with squab ladies, and still squabber children, returning to some of those Cape inland settlements with names which only a Dutchman can pronounce; Portuguese, with coffee-coloured complexions and boots with long toes upwards bent, after the Elizabethan pattern; pale-faced gentlemen bound to Madeira; feebly-moving ladies making the passage of the ocean in quest of the sun; unhappy rheumatics dragging their limbs after them like ostriches with broken legs; lively and gushing ladies wasting more tenderness upon the dogs in their arms than upon the mothers weeping by their side; military gentlemen with the disciplined face and the capacity of rapid adaptation that springs from experience of travel; foreigners, unable to speak a word of English, awaiting the arrival of their luggage with yearning looks and a wistful expression of eyes not a little moving. Meanwhile, babies are crying loudly; children, running about, are hooking themselves on to the wrong people, and calling for their mothers; individuals in brass buttons spring on to the paddle-box and shout shorewards with a hundred signs in them of feeling certain that nothing can come of it. And all the while down the gangway-shoot, as it is called, I believe, rattle incessant volleys of luggage, boxes of all kinds and shapes, immense trunks, portmanteaux, covered with scores of labels, indicating that many of the people who are proceeding to the Cape in the *Tartar* are not travelling for the first time in their lives.

When I was writing about the Southampton Docks two or three years ago, I referred to the scene of the

departure of one of the West India steamers. I little thought that I should become an actor on a stage before which I then sat as a spectator. I remember the farewells, the lingering flourishes of hats and handkerchiefs, the weeping postures of some who stood on the shore, and some who stood on the stern of the steamer, as the beautiful and majestic vessel slowly canted her head out for the open. There is no port fuller of the happy or the melancholy associations of leave-taking or returning than Southampton. Its traditions in this direction are written in the annals of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, and they are still abundantly and impressively perpetuated by the numberless fine steamers which are week after week sailing from these spacious and important docks to all parts of the world. Memory indeed kindles an emotion almost of affection for this fine old port, and seated on the deck of the tender it was with pleasure and interest that I listened to what a gentleman had to tell me of the prosperity of these docks, and their contemplated enlargement by the addition of a deep and very extensive area of water, at no very distant date. There was no one on board that tender, I dare say, who would not have been heartily glad if the deep water dock had had existence. It is certainly very much pleasanter to step from your hotel right on board the steamer you are going to sail away in than to sit on the deck of a tug, on a bitter, damp day, waiting for people and luggage to arrive to start for the vessel that lies veiled in the blankness a mile or two out upon the icy waters.

With our decks loaded with luggage, our seats filled with passengers and their friends who were accompanying them to the vessel, we got under weigh for the *Tartar*, an utterly invisible object and startlingly dreamlike,

when you thought of her as a massive iron fabric that was to convey you six thousand miles, and then looked in the direction where she should have been plain, and found nothing there but a motionless pallid faintness. Was it possible, I asked, that the steamer would attempt to get away in such weather as this? "Well," was the answer, "the vessel would lift her anchor, and drop down a little distance, and bring up again if the smother lingered; but she was bound to get under weigh anyhow." A light air blew, the fog thinned here and there, the loom of the shore came sullenly glooming up to starboard, in places the water gleamed in the flaws of the vapoury atmosphere with the keen, blue, ice-like tint of steel. Wreaths of the mist lifted and disclosed the hull of a ship at anchor, obscuring her masts, so that only ten or twenty feet of them, perhaps, were visible above the deck. We steamed cautiously, groping our way along, until presently we discerned three mastheads with vanes upon them that made them look like spires soaring out of a mass of solid folds of mist, luminous in whiteness. The sight was an extraordinary one: between the tender and that cloud dominated by the three mastheads the steel-coloured water lay clear; and within that cloud floated a structure of eight thousand tons displacement, every sound aboard of her coming faintly through the thickness, unless it were the notes of her deep-throated bell, which rang solemn and sonorous out of the white, glistening mysterious envelopment.

We had forged ahead of the *Tartar* in order to manœuvre, so as to get alongside of her, when a draught of air blowing lively smote the cloud in which the vessel lay and sent it swirling like steam. A beam of sunshine came down at that moment and struck the steamer full,

kindling a hundred white fires in her, and submitting a picture full of soft lustre and ocean beauty. The vapour stood up behind in its silvery blankness and formed a background for the ship to show against; and then, as though the wand of a magician had transformed the cloud into a majestic fabric, there stood before me the proportions of a great ocean steamship, with the light of the sun glorious on the royal coat of arms and the gilded splendours about it which embellished the head of her straight stem, her rows of windows reflecting every one of them a little luminary, with fibres of fire shooting out of it. Captain and mates in uniform looked down upon us from the bridge or over the side. A crowd of heads forward watched our approach with interest. An immense funnel towered past the saloon, and the three iron masts went straight up into the dim and misty blue overhead "like blasted pines," to use Tom Cringle's simile.

Embarkation by tender is usually accompanied with so much confusion as to leave little room for impressions. There is the creaking and straining of steam or hydraulic gear; there is the hoarse bawling of sailors and others; there is the shoving and pushing of people trying to form themselves into a procession to pass over a gangway that admits of but one or two at a time; there is the crowd of excited people hanging about to point out their luggage to the stewards; there is also the extreme novelty of a great ship's decks, with their structures and super-structures, their deck-cabins, ladders, high coamings, alley-ways, and the rest of the complications, little more than a maze to the unpractised eye. Long before the passengers and luggage were fairly aboard the fog had blown down again, and you heard in the far distance the dull, moaning noises of steamers en-

deavouring to denote their whereabouts with their whistles. I confess that it was not without surprise and very lively misgivings that, whilst in my cabin, I felt the vibration of the engines. This meant that we had started. I went into the alley-way alongside of the saloon and looked over the side. It was as thick as mud. The fog pressed close to the ship, and there was not a smudge in it to mark an outline of any kind. The water was slipping past in bubbles and small foaming eddies, but slowly indeed. Suddenly the vibration ceased; and the curious sense of death-like stillness that seems to follow upon the abrupt cessation of the movement of great engines was rudely qualified by a hideous screeching noise at the head of the funnel. This was the steam-horn. The fog seemed to have affected its pipes, for its notes at first were horribly gasping and asthmatic; but it cleared out presently into a wild screech, which hummed in the ear till one's very brains rattled to it, and when it ceased it found an echo in a most melancholy screaming on the starboard quarter, where, when the fog slightly thinned, we perceived a steamer heading our way, very unpleasantly close to us, and steering apparently so as to come dead into our wake.

To appreciate the anxieties, worries, and responsibilities of the shipmaster, it is necessary to be on board a huge floating palace like the *Tartar* when there is an impenetrable thickness all around, and when the ship is in a channel crowded with a thousand difficulties of navigation. The engine-room alarum was for ever ringing out its hollow metallic tones, brimful of the significance which the dangers of the deep communicate to the directions of the mariner. For a few moments the engines would be travelling with a comparatively

rapid pulsation, then to the metallic notes of the communicator the throbbing languished; after a little it ceased, once more swiftly obedient to the striking of the bell, and then the sense of uncertainty that the sudden stillness inspired would be heightened into a feeling of almost painful uneasiness when the steam-horn gave forth its hoarse, penetrating note from the summit of the funnel, and when the eye, glancing forwards, found itself baffled and blinded by the fog that floated like a wall to the very stem of the steamer. The early night came down fast, and still found the *Tartar* stealthily sneaking along, often pausing and sounding her whistle, which seemed to find reverberations in the clouded atmosphere in the wailings and the moanings of fog signals ahead and astern. It was quite dark when the fog thinned, exposing a tolerably broad surface of water, when, looking over the rail, I saw a large German steamer passing at full speed, bound to Southampton from New York. She swept through the darkness like a stream of fire—every window, port-hole, and scuttle brilliant with the lustre of the electric light or the flames of oil lamps. She made a noble show, certainly; her trail of smoke full of spangles, the white water throbbing pallid from her stem, and rushing like a line of dim snow along her bends into her wake. The darkness swelled her up into giant proportions, and she passed away astern rapidly like a phantom ship full of fire.*

The story of this passage through the abominable thickness of the fog was told to me by Captain Travers, the commander of the ship, on our arrival at Plymouth. I repeat it for the edification of landsmen, for it has ever been my wish since I first took pen in hand to describe

* It was afterwards reported that a smack had been cut down and her crew drowned by this steamer.

the sea and those who navigate it for a living, to do justice to the masters and mates of the British merchant service by illustrating not so much the actual routine of their daily lives as the large, grave, and weighty responsibilities imposed upon them in discharge of their duties as men to whom are committed the safety and comfort of passengers and crews, and the secure conveyance of costly fabrics and valuable merchandise. But the mariner will also, I trust, find something to interest him in the following narrative:

"We left Netley," said Captain Travers to me, "at three p.m.; the weather was very thick, and there was a light N.E. wind blowing. At 3.25 we passed the Calshot Spit Light-vessel, and the loom of the Isle of Wight was all that we could see in the shape of land. The Thorn and the Bramble buoys were scarcely visible. 'It is clearing a bit, sir,' said the pilot; 'I can make out the guard-ship in Cowes Roads.' There, to be sure, was the *Hector*, showing up in a lumping shadow that made her look twice as big as the old *Duke of Wellington*. 'Sail on the port bow!' sung out the look-out. This was the Irish boat, a very short distance away, bound like ourselves to Plymouth. Just as we passed her the pilot sighted Lepe Middle Buoy. 'There's Lepe, sir,' he cried; the loom of it was so large that I took it for a boat. We now passed the Irish steamer, and it then came down so thick that it was like steaming through a Dutch cheese. 'Ease down to dead slow and keep the horn going, please, sir,' said the pilot. This was done, the horn being answered by the Irish boat that was now, as I judged, about a ship's length astern, but out of sight. It was then 3.45 p.m., and the night darkening over us. 'I want to steer W. ½ S. magnetic,' said the pilot: W. ¾ S. by the standard (*i.e.*, a Sir William Thomson's,

and having 2 deg. to 3 deg. easterly deviation (westerly course). I gave the order, and the ship was steered by that course down the Solent; before long the fog lifted over the Island, and at 3.50 we proceeded half-speed. It was still, however, very thick. 'There's Yarmouth Pier!' cried the pilot, and we could just distinguish it under the fog. A bright light right ahead was reported; this was Hurst Castle light. 'That's a capital course, sir,' said the pilot; 'we couldn't have hit it better.' As he spoke we heard the sound of a deep horn ahead, and all of a sudden there seemed to leap right out of the fog one of the large four-masted steamers of the North German Lloyd. She passed us close on the port side, and soon afterwards we saw the Southampton pilot's cutter. So we stopped and made his dingy fast, and proceeded again quite slow, the Channel pilot declining to take charge till the ship was outside the Needles. On sighting the high and low lights of Hurst we discharged the Southampton pilot, and at five p.m. we passed the Needles and set the course W. ½ S. The weather was now clearing, and a light would have been visible at a distance of about three miles. Thus onwards past Anvil Point light, when the course was altered to W. ¼ S., to close the Shamble Light Vessel, in order that we might see her. At 7.48 Portland High light was abeam, distant six miles, and at ten minutes past eleven we sighted the Start light, and passed it twenty minutes later at a distance of three miles. At twenty minutes past one we stopped the engines and received the Plymouth pilot who took charge."

This reads like the plain deposition of a ship-master. Scores of little narratives of this description are week after week appearing in the newspapers. Their meaning is always understood by the sailor, but the landsman

must go to sea and take part in the drama as it is acted and related to grasp the full meaning of all that happens and all that is told. As I listened to Captain Travers telling me of this run of his from Southampton Water to Plymouth through a dense fog, such portions of the picture as I had been able to catch as an eye-witness rose up again before me; once more I leaned over the side and saw the dim white water washing past into the wet mysterious gloom astern. I heard again the curious voices of the engines, sometimes sounds as of people quarrelling, then of people singing, then of the subdued cries of a mob, then a harsher wrangling as of giants, with a clashing as of leviathan fire-irons amid shouts of anger, with the stealthy hissing of the hydraulic steering-gear threading the echoes of the engine-room, and the clamour of revolving arms of steel, and the incessant shovelling of coals. Once again I looked around into the darkness, and saw no light nor beacon of any kind to indicate our whereabouts. The hoarse yelling of the steam horn resounded in my ears, and the startling noise found a wild accentuation in the seething sound of the water rushing from the discharge pipe. Meanwhile the captain, pilot, and mates, ceaselessly vigilant, are conveying this great ship with her numerous passengers and her valuable freight through the intricacies of a difficult and perilous channel. We go to bed, leaving our lives in the hands of the captain and pilot, and quitting a deck wet with a thickness that sometimes eclipses from our sight the rays of light breaking from the bright lantern high up on the stay forward; and when we awake the sun is shining brightly over Plymouth Sound, on whose smooth breast our three-masted schooner lies to her anchor tranquilly resting, with Mount Edgecumbe in its winter beauty, sloping down

to the pale blue surface, whilst a little barque past the breakwater hoists her main top-gallant sail to the faint off-shore wind, and passes away with the light upon her sails gleaming in silver in the water under the shadow of her hull.

CHAPTER II.

TO MADEIRA.

After we left Plymouth a pleasant wind came on to blow, with a light swell from the same quarter that promised weight later on. The Americans had predicted a cyclone about this time, and you noticed a little uneasiness among some of the passengers as they cast their glances aloft at the cold greenish sky, along which some clouds of a hue resembling compacted smoke were journeying leisurely, and when they watched the quiet heave of the long ship to the swell lifting in low folds to her iron side. The pace was good, a full thirteen, as fast as a clipper sailing ship could run with a gale of wind blowing over her taffrail. Owing to the saloon being right amidships, it was difficult to realize that you were at sea. The December light, sifting through spacious skylights and numerous large windows, put a dull lustre into the polished woods, the bright mirrors, the many silvered lamps. The sea line rose and fell with rhythmic action through the windows, but not the least inconvenience was felt apparently by even those who, one might have sworn, would have succumbed to the faintest movement of the vessel. A saloon long enough to demand a roof of hurricane deck one hundred and

seventy feet in length may, I think, be justly termed a spacious apartment. As an old Jack myself, I liked nothing so much as the breadth of this commodious structure. Outside, on either hand, went "alley-ways," as they are called; gangways, probably, would have been the old term for them. The width of these alley-ways I do not know; they were on either side, narrowing the breadth of the saloon to the extent of their dimensions; and yet, when I looked at the beam of that saloon, it was like gazing at the main deck of a line-of-battle-ship. The truth is the *Tartar* is only eight times as long as she is broad, a theory of proportions that demands, at all events, appreciative recognition at the hands of a sailor. We have to thank the late Mr. Froude for insisting upon width as a vital factor in the seaworthiness and speed of ships. It is, because when standing on the steamer's bridge I would look down upon and along her and mark in the fabric an outline that seemed fit to rear royal and even sky-sail poles to the heavens, that I salute the *Tartar* as a very admirable model, and a further triumphant example yet of the wisdom of building a ship to look like a ship and to behave like a ship.

But there is one point I am not sure about; I refer to it in no controversial spirit, but merely because the *Tartar* happens to be typical in this respect of other large fine steamers in the passenger trade. All along the bottom of her she has tanks for water ballast. These tanks, it seems, are used merely when it is necessary to trim her. In other words, the ship, like many more of the vessels thus fitted, goes to sea with the tanks empty. Now, is not this idea of sending a ship afloat with a set of empty cylinders built at the bottom of her a complete subversion of all the notions concerning the art of safe and

stable flotation? When you build a lifeboat you run air-tight cylinders along her gunwales. These cylinders, if they do not prevent her from capsizing help her to right swiftly, and greatly increase her buoyancy. But suppose, instead of fixing them alongside the boat, you secured them to her keel? I had many an argument with my friend Captain Travers on this subject. He maintained that these empty ballast tanks improved the ship's seaworthiness. I, on the other hand, contended that by leaving them empty they contributed to the rolling of the ship, and decreased the angle of heel at which she could recover herself. The point is an interesting one. I do not profess to speak with scientific knowledge on the subject. But common sense is at the bottom of all such things; and it seems to me that if you were to attach bladders to the feet of a swimmer instead of under his arms, he would have some difficulty in keeping his head up.

Just before sundown, on the day of our leaving Plymouth, I went on deck, and saw a large sailing ship on the starboard bow. She was close hauled under topgallant sails, and was looking well up, crushing the surly swell with her forefoot and pitching with the regular action of a pendulum. We shifted our helm to pass her, but, though our speed was a good thirteen knots, she held her own nobly, and dropped astern with an obstinate clinging to our skirts that enabled me to have a fine view of her from different points.

Say what you will of steamers, the full-rigged sailing ship is the one real beauty of the sea. I have no doubt we offered a handsome show to the eyes of the crew of that square-rigger, with our rows of windows catching the reddish light that hung deep and threatening amongst the western clouds, with the swift shearing of our iron

stem through the water, that came aft boiling to the propeller, with the majestic heavings of the leviathan form urged by an invisible power of the existence of which even the massive leaning funnel offered but the barest hint in the thin blowing of smoke that went in a faint brown haze over the sea. But the iron ship, with her sails set to a hair, her square yards, her stay-sails like pencilled shadows between the masts, the delicate outlines of her jibs yearning seawards to the jibbooms surely formed of the two vessels the truer ocean picture. I watched with delight her long floating launches into the livid hollows; her light and nimble emergence with the luffs of her topgallant sails trembling as though the shapely fabric's impatience of our steady passage past her thrilled from her heart into those airy heights. She was beautiful when abeam of us, when you saw into the hollow of every sail and marked how the curved shadowings came and went with her lifting and falling to the respiration of the deep; she was beautiful when she had veered well upon our quarter, and with flying jib-boom heading for us, luffed till you saw nothing but the swell of her canvas arching like the bosom of a maiden beyond each bolt rope, whilst the foam to her bowing swelled to the hawse pipes; and she was still beautiful when she had grown toy-like on our lee quarter and had become little more than a white phantom star-like in the obscuration of the evening and in the windy dimness as it crept imperceptibly over the frothing sea.

I stood with Captain Travers surveying this picture. The proximity of the vessel coupled with our having had occasion to shift our helm, set me speculating upon collisions at sea, the most fruitful in dreadful results of all the disasters that can happen upon the ocean.

"I suppose," said I to the commander, "that you will have had many close shaves in your time?"

"Yes," he answered, "close shaves, as they are called, are incessantly happening. Speaking on behalf of myself and of men in command of mail steamers like this vessel, I do not scruple to say that the risks we run are entirely owing to the indifference and carelessness of those in charge of approaching ships. I remember on one voyage I was on the look-out for the Stone, as we call the Eddystone, on a very fine night in January. A sail was reported on the starboard bow. Seeing no lights I, of course, imagined that the ship—she was a barque—was steering the same course as we. After a little I remarked to the officer of the watch that we were coming up very fast with the vessel and, as he was still on my starboard bow, I determined to pass on his port side, and therefore starboarded the helm. Imagine my surprise when with our helm to starboard, we suddenly saw his *red light!* I instantly put the helm hard-a-port, and telegraphed to the engine-room to 'stand by.' The result was we just shaved his yard-arms; and you will scarcely believe me when I tell you that before he had got past my port beam he had taken his red light in, for I saw one of the hands carrying it along the poop.*

"I will give you another instance," continued the captain, "to illustrate the sort of attention the rule of the road receives at the hands of some masters. On my last voyage we had sighted the Eddystone, when a large steamer was reported broad on the port bow. We were proceeding under easy steam, that we might not arrive too early at Plymouth. Consequently, we and the stranger closed each other. His green and masthead

* By this, of course, is understood that the vessel carried her side-lights aft.

lights were alone visible the whole time, so it was clearly his duty to give way to me. Instead of this he drew closer and closer, until we could discern the lights in his houses, and hear the roar of the water under his bow. He then put his helm to starboard, and ran alongside of us for some time, when, finding that we were not going faster than he, he was forced to starboard still more, and, I have no doubt, eased his engines so as to admit of our going clear of him. The chief mate asked me if he should sound the horn. I said, no. I was determined neither to sound the horn nor alter the course. I was in the right; the other knew it; and I was not to be thrust out of my road to suit the convenience of the tramp. This class of vessel I have called the steam bully of the North Atlantic."

Here you have one of the worst of the difficulties and anxieties of the shipmaster. If a sailor is not acquainted with the hundred perils which beset his calling, I am sure he is not to be instructed in them by landsmen; yet it is the sailor who, resolved to push blindly forwards, taking no pains to have a bright look-out kept, and exhibiting the maddest indifference to the rules laid down for him for the avoidance of the dreadful danger of collision, complicates the worries of his brother sailor, and makes a perpetual menace of any portion of the ocean in which he and his ship are encountered.

I do not know whether the American prediction of a cyclone was fulfilled, but I have a lively recollection of the very heavy beam swell and quartering sea through which we drove past Ushant and down the Bay. The rolling of a steamer is very different from that of a sailing ship. The sails of a square-rigger prevent her from coming heavily to windward. With her lee lurches she will lie down to it, indeed, and I have been in a ship

when she has very nearly rolled her lee fair-leaders under, but her weather rolls have been stayed by the pressure of the gale in her canvas, and I doubt if she ever came further to windward than to bring her spars plomb up and down. But if a steamer rolls heavily to port she is bound to roll as heavily to starboard. There is nothing to stop her. Her little show of canvas no more hinders her windward reel than the exposure of a silk pocket-handkerchief would. She is wall-sided and bound to go to work like a see-saw. The *Tartar* was light; from the hurricane deck it was like looking from the rail of a line-of-battle ship, and the giant structure went thundering and rolling along her course like a gallied whale. It was a fine sight to peer over the side and see her crush the lumping masses of dark green water from her bows till the foam stood out an acre broad on either hand, covering the snapping and angry folds of the surface of seething snow, and raising savage billows which met the oncoming seas with equal spite, when they would rise roaring in spray; so that the ship's wake and the water for many fathoms on either side of it looked as though a tempest were passing along there. The humours of the saloon were many, some of them broad and even startling. Up in the far end would sit a young wife, with her husband standing at the door yearning for her but unable to get at her. I watched one such incident with interest. She cast imploring glances at him, but for a long while he dared not let go. At last he released his grasp, slided towards a table, fell under it, rolled out again, got up and tumbled into the arms of a waiter, whom he embraced and refused to let go of until the movements of the ship had pitched them both into a seat. It took him ten minutes to reach his wife, and in that time he had fallen down three times,

he had had his breath struck out of him, he had grasped a cruet-stand and upset the contents of it in his wild reachings after something to steady himself by, and when he had arrived at his wife's side I saw him pointing to his forehead, where there afterwards appeared a black lump about the size of the egg of a bantam.

Periodically in the rolling of ships there comes an extra heavy lurch. You can feel what is going to happen with your feet. There is a peculiar upward floating heave, a short pause of the great fabric, with her masts perpendicular, on the brow of the swell, a sort of hanging as it were, and then a long clattering swoop down the side into the hollow, until looking over you see the angry and frothing plain of the deep going up to the horizon like a sloping wall against the sky, and the throbbing waters rushing past at fourteen miles an hour almost lift to the very rail itself. I say you can feel this before it happens, just as in a sailing ship you can tell, when grasping the spokes, by the peculiar "hang" of her, that she is bound to ship a sea. Every lurch of the kind on board the *Tartar* was accompanied by a smash of some sort or other. I would watch the dessert sliding up and down in the fiddles; spoons, forks, and glasses slipping to and fro as regularly as the action of the sea, whilst the stewards, or waiters, as they are called, would stagger to the dishes and, with outstretched fingers, endeavour to stop the furniture from rolling off the table. The noises which attended these extra heavy rolls were extraordinary; a mingling of the muffled cries of persons shut up in their berths with the sounds of breaking crockery, of rushing baggage, and of people flying first to port and then coming back with irresistible velocity to starboard. An elderly gentleman was forced into a sort of gallop by one peculiarly smart lurch; he

was making his way out of the music saloon when the ship sloped her decks to a heavy sea; he started as if for a wager, took the high coaming in the doorway as a horse would a hedge, plumped with his forehead against one of the boats, then spun round and fell heavily in a sitting posture. After this he went about for some days with his head strapped up in sticking-plaster.

And yet, amidst all this rolling and groaning work in the Bay of Biscay, I vividly remember looking down upon as pretty a scene as ever I witnessed. I leaned over the rail of the music-saloon; above me was a great handsome domed skylight; gazing down, I could see as though into a well to the main deck where there was a table at which a number of children with their nurses and attendants were eating. It was a heavy day, the wind on the quarter, and a long, high swell: the water was blue in places and flecked with white, and the sun shone out brilliant at times on the creaming heads of the surges and on many white gulls chasing us and flying ahead of us, and on the gleaming shoulder-of-mutton canvas that swelled their cloths from the masts, and upon the large and lustrous skylight under which I stood looking down upon a charming nursery-picture. The children were variously dressed, all of them prettily; the sunshine fell upon sweet faces and golden curls, and through the straining and groaning noises that kept the great metal structure resonant, and through the ceaseless grinding and pulsing of the engines, and through the long-drawn hoarse hissing of the hydraulic steering-gear, controlled in the wheel-house by a short tiller, you could hear the music of the children's laughter. Those rows of bright and pretty little faces communicated an inexpressible human interest to as much of the picture of the ship as I commanded

from the spot where I stood. There is not a vessel afloat in which you may not find an element of deep pathos in the mere thought of her being the home of the many or the few who are in her. She is a tiny speck upon the multitudinous waters, hidden from the sight of man at the little distance of a handful of miles, a minute fragment of human skill and courage, under the vast and eternal dome of heaven, whose immensity the night best reveals with the stars she kindles from sea-line to sea-line. But the pathos you find in her, when thinking of her amid the terrible loneliness of the deep as a little world of human passions, feelings, and emotions, is deepened by the presence of children, by their sports, their snatches of song, the wonder and delight in their restless, inquisitive eyes. The children and their companions came and went dimly and brightly with the reeling of the ship through the sweeping of the sunbeams on and off the skylight. It was more like a vision, indeed, than a reality—a poem in the heart of the storming steamer.

There is one condition of the ocean steamer that greatly adds to the discomfort of a heavy beam sea, and that is the piano. People may be sick, delicate ladies may be sleeping after a long restless night with troublesome babies, passengers may be attempting to write letters to their friends at home, so as to be ready for the mail; but the piano is bound to be played. I cannot persuade myself that more than ten people out of every hundred who make a voyage have the least liking for the kind of music that is to be promised or threatened by a ship's piano. If there be one place in the world in which a man should consider himself safe from the petty harassments of shore life it is a ship. He escapes the telegram, the postman, the tradesman with his little

account, and a hundred other things. Why, then should the piano follow him? A piano on board ship is more vexatious and intolerable than a German band on shore. You can drive a German band away, but it is not easy or pleasant to go up to a lady who, with both feet on the pedals, is hammering through a piece of complicated and wrangling music, and ask her to desist because you want to read or your wife wants to sleep.*

The people who excite my wonder and interest most in heavy weather are the stewards, or waiters, as they are now called. There is nothing very wonderful in forecastle Jack jumping aloft, in his running at headlong speed along decks sloping to an angle of forty degrees, in his sliding out to the end of a studding-sail boom, or in his hanging on with his eyelids to the jibboom of a ship that plunges him under water with every pitch and brings him up smiling and hearty to go on passing the gaskets. You look for all this in a sailor, and see nothing surprising in such activity. But what are you to think of a waiter who, when the steamer is rolling so heavily that people are sliding off their seats, and the dinner things deliberately tumbling overboard out of the fiddles, runs about with his hands full of smoking vegetables, or with three or four plates of meat upon him, or bearing a tray crowded with about half a hundredweight of tumblers and wine glasses? Be the weather what it will, somehow the cook always manages

* "When you are desired to sing in company, I would advise you to refuse; for it is a thousand to one but that you torment us with affectation or a bad voice" (Oliver Goldsmith, "Essays"). It is bad judgment to place the piano in the saloon. Everybody is then at the mercy of the egotist. The piano should be lodged in a part of the ship remote from the sleeping berths. They give you a smoking-room: why not furnish a similar structure with a piano, so that people who like noise may have it to themselves?

to be up to time, and the waiters are to be seen sailing about with the same ease and nimbleness that would be apparent in them on the motionless floor of a dining hall on land. Ships' stewards are an intelligent and obliging body of men, but as a community not peculiarly interesting. One fellow, however, who waited on the people facing me at my table, I would find myself watching at the start with some attention. He had large, protruding eyes, with the boiled and lustreless expression that comes from liquor, more particularly gin; he wore rings on his fingers and bangles on his wrists, expressed himself in correct English and with a cultured accent. One evening somebody treated him to a drink or two, and this made him slightly drunk and darkly communicative. He stood before me, he fixed a blood-shot eye on mine, and, smiting his bosom, vaguely gave me to understand that a woman—with a capital "W"—was at the bottom of it all. He doubtless meant whisky, but the word woman suggested mystery and romance. He showed me his watch, with a coat of arms on the back of it, and he also showed me his rings. He then smote himself afresh several times, and after much indistinguishable muttering hastily withdrew to open a bottle of soda-water for a passenger. I afterwards learned that he was the son of a gentleman of good position in London, and it was rumoured he had an uncle who was a baronet. He had led a strange life, making on one occasion as much as fifteen thousand pounds in a *coup*, but drink brought him down at last, and he was glad to wait at a table at which he was far fitter to sit. This man recalled to my mind a story of a very conceited, pompous fellow, extremely wealthy, full of airs and boasts of his kingly antecedents and aristocratic connections, embarking in a steamer and finding

his only brother a waiter at the very table at which he had taken his seat!

Heavy weather—it was in December, it will be remembered—followed us down the Bay and away on into the wide waters of the Atlantic. There were a hundred sights to delight one in the ocean picture of sullen mornings, breaking into afternoons bright with flying sunshine and vital with the leaping of billows and the stormy tint of sweeping cloud shadows. The surge in trembling massive bodies of roaring white, fell from the leviathan metal bows in thunder shocks; the swell, broken and maddened by the passage of our giant keel, rose tempestuously to the quarter, lifting the enormous propeller till the racing of it trembled through the length of the ship in a vibration that startled you with its suddenness. First it was two hundred and ninety-six miles a day, then three hundred and eighteen, then three hundred and fourteen, and so on; till, rising one morning and going on deck, there, fair ahead coming and going with the heave of the ship, I saw the dim blue land of Madeira, and the cloud-like patch on its left. As if by magic, with the lifting of this azure vision above the sea-line the temperature sweetened into balminess, and the swell, thinning down, came with a fine-weather slowness along to the steamer, taking from the brightening sky a blueness inexpressibly beautiful for its translucency and for its suggestion of a sunny clime.

CHAPTER III.

HEADING SOUTH.

Of Madeira so much has been written that little or nothing remains to be said. The green and beautiful island is a noble refreshment to the sight after the tedious and tossing days of a stormy sea passage. The lofty mass of land breaks in a slow revelation of fairy beauty as it first darkens upon the view, and then brightens out into clear, sunny, and many-coloured proportions from the faint shadow it submits to the eye when it is first seen. I was haunted as we approached with the memory of the picturesque old legend of the Englishman running away, four or five hundred years ago, with the lady of his love, who died soon after their arrival, and whose early death reads like the historic anticipation of the melancholy uses to which this fertile and gilded spot of land would be put by future travellers in search of health.* From the waters abreast of Funchal the island offers a spectacle of tender loveliness; the towering peaks have nothing forbidding in their elevation; the vapour in soft white masses wreathes

* The story runs thus: In 1344, an Englishman named Macham, sailing to Spain with a lady whom he had carried off, was driven by a gale to Madeira. Macham was enchanted by the island, and conveyed his sweetheart, who was seriously ill, ashore. She died. Another gale arose and drove the vessel to sea, leaving Macham and a few others behind. The bereaved lover, says the story, "spent his time in erecting a small chapel, or mausoleum, over her grave, and on a stone tablet inscribed her name and a statement of the adventures which had doomed her to be laid thus far away, not only from the ashes of her fathers, but from all else of human kind." The tale will be found in Hakluyt; Drayton has versified it in his "Polyolbion," and Campbell gives it in his "Lives of the Admirals."

itself like garlands of snow about the heads of the mountains. The atmosphere has the brilliancy of burnished glass, but it imparts, for all that, a singular tenderness of prismatic tint to what you view through it, and every colour strikes the sight with a sort of mellowness in its purity. The white houses, dwarfed by distance, shine like ivory toys, and the foam winks in fitful flashes at the foot of the rocks. Showers of rain were falling over one part of the island when we brought up, and many rainbows spanned the numerous ravines, gorges, and scars, with here and there the dense foliage breaking through the iridescent arches; whilst further on, where the shadow of the squall lay deep, the land faded into a dim blue, looming with a clear head or two of hill above it; and the sea-line swept round it brimming azure and sparkling to its foot.

If you remain on board ship off Madeira, there are plenty of clamorous swimming boys to take good care that repose shall form no element of your survey. Dingy-skinned lads, black-skinned lads, yellow-haired lads with coffee-coloured bodies, raise a thousand distracting yells over the ship's side in their solicitations to you to throw money for them to dive after. The ship is also boarded, and in a manner carried by a crew of dealers in all sorts of articles, most of them deformed, one-eyed, one-legged, scarlet with unconcealed sores, and so forth. The gaze goes with relief from this misery of rags and disease to the adjacent islands hanging dark and blue in the distance, with the sunshine feebly illuminating the more accentuated features. The bright azure water spreading smooth into boundless distance forms a perfect setting for these gems of land. A yacht with awning spread lay near us, and our passage of four days from Southampton grew dream-like when I con-

trasted that white covering and the shadow it cast upon the decks of the yacht with the bitter winds and drenching fogs we had left behind us in the English Channel, and the cold air, the high swell, and the broken seas of Finisterre and St. Vincent.

We got under weigh in the afternoon, with our company of passengers somewhat thinned in number. It was now raining heavily over parts of Madeira, and the atmosphere was rendered uncomfortable by the tepid humidity of it. It seemed extraordinary that so many people should, in defiance of the strong misgivings which have been expressed as to the health-yielding qualities of this climate, determine to land there, instead of proceeding to the magnificent skies and the wide and varied climatic fields which are offered by the colonies of South Africa. Madeira is unquestionably a beautiful island, but it seems to me one of the saddest spots in the world. Its annals are full of death, and hundreds are lured to it only to be bitterly cheated in their dearest hopes. Besides, the passage to the island is the most disagreeable part of the voyage to the Cape of Good Hope. You have the swells of the Bay of Biscay, and plentiful risks of the rude tempestuous weather of the North Atlantic. But Madeira once passed, you straightway enter upon sunny seas, and steam under blue and golden skies; and till Table Bay is entered it is reckoned a novel experience if one meets with more than a light head sea in the tail of the South East Trades.

I stood leaning over the rail, watching the features of the lovely land growing faint at the extremity of our gleaming wake; and whilst thinking over some of the white-faced and trembling people whom we had brought with us and whom I had noticed feebly descending the gangway ladder to enter the shore boats, it came into

my head to ask the ship's doctor some questions touching the benefit to be derived by an invalid from a journey to the Cape. He was a gentleman of experience, had made the voyage many times, had had many kinds of patients under his charge, and was well qualified therefore to give an opinion. After speaking of some of the people who had left us at Madeira, I inquired what maladies he considered a voyage to the Cape good for.

He answered, "I should say that every chronic disease, no matter of what character, is sure of alleviation, if not of being completely cured, by a fine weather trip like this. The change of scene, the mild, pure, refreshing breezes, the rest, the absolute freedom from all worry and anxiety, are strong adjuncts to the appropriate drugs or treatment in each case. Three sorts of patients are chiefly benefited; I mean the consumptive, the rheumatic, and those who are suffering from what is termed nervous exhaustion, the most distressing perhaps of all human complaints, because of the physical suffering involving mental distress. In the case of consumption, the sweet, exhilarating air and the warm weather almost invariably work wonders; but always providing that the voyage be undertaken in time. Unhappily, as we medical men know, it is too commonly the practice of patients to postpone their departure until the disease has got a strong hold of them; and the result is that we are constantly seeing patients helped on board at Southampton in the last stage of consumption, only to die of exhaustion on entering the tropics through inability to withstand the heat and the consequent profuse perspirations. If," he continued, "patients of this sort had determined to trust themselves to our tender mercies at the beginning of their illness, the probability is that the round voyage, with perhaps a stay of a month or two at the Cape, would have perfectly recovered them."

"And rheumatism?" said I.

"Well," he replied, "for chronic muscular rheumatism—I will not speak of arthritis*—the warm and equable climate we have in passing through the tropics possesses marvellous curative powers. I can offer myself as an instance. I was almost paralyzed by muscular rheumatism; yet, after my first voyage the malady left me, and I have never had an hour's suffering since from it. As to nervous exhaustion, I can only say that those whose minds have been almost unhinged by business troubles, by grief, or by mental shock of any kind, find in the peaceful life of a steamer, with the change of scene and the round of innocent amusements you get on board ship, the only effectual kind of treatment it is possible to prescribe. Again, to people recovering from almost any of the acute diseases, a ship offers a nearly perfect convalescent home."

"Can you," said I, "tell me of any cures which have come under your notice?"

"It is difficult to give instances," he answered; "I will tell you why. You have your patient under observation for eighteen or twenty days only, because people, as a rule, seldom return in the same ship; you lose sight of them, and their further progress can only be a matter of conjecture. But of the comparatively small number of persons who make the round trip I could tell you of several recoveries. One remarkable case was that of a middle-aged gentleman, whose nervous system had been cruelly prostrated by domestic

* For chronic rheumatoid arthritis, as it is called, a residence in South Africa will prove of little or no good: though even of this obstinate disorder the voyage, by helping the general health, diminishes the sufferings. Other forms of rheumatism are unquestionably benefited or cured by the trip.

trouble. When he came on board he was the merest wreck of a man, and when he landed in England he was, both mentally and physically, as sound as ever he had been in the healthiest period of his life. Another case was that of a youth suffering from incipient phthisis, which was certified by one of the leading London consultants. The warmth and sea breezes so thoroughly restored him that, on visiting his medical adviser on his return, not the least trace of the malady was discoverable."

"You think," I said, "a residence at the Cape for consumptive people preferable to a residence at Madeira?"

"Assuredly. I have visited the coast towns of the colony only, and cannot therefore speak from personal experience of the climatic conditions of the districts up country; but the testimonies that have reached me, place beyond all dispute the certainty of cures in the Cape Colonies, and of corresponding failures not only at Madeira, but at the Mediterranean and other popular South European resorts. Bloemfontein, in the Orange Free States, has a high local reputation for its climatic cures of consumption. I say local, because that part of the world has yet to be discovered by or be made known to our Northern sufferers. Some parts of the Transvaal, too, and of the Northern portion of Natal, at the foot of the Drakensberg Mountains, have also a climate that seems specially designed for this class of patients. One is constantly meeting at the Cape, or whilst travelling to and fro coastwise, with colonists in excellent health, who assure one that, when they first went out to South Africa, they arrived dying men. Such power does a dry and genial climate possess in arresting the destructive tubercular processes! But to put the thing fairly; those

who linger at home and postpone their departure to a time when help is hopeless, run down hill at a fearful pace in the heat of the Cape summer. We have, as you know, a lady on board who is dreadfully ill with consumption; I very much fear that the heat we must expect on our arrival at South Africa will prove more than her small remaining stock of strength can withstand. Should she, however, happily manage to pull through it, there is every reason to believe that, during the ensuing winter, she will so improve as to be practically out of danger by the time the next summer comes round."

"I notice that there is a good deal of drinking on board; what is your experience in this direction?"

"Well, I must confess that a considerable amount of 'nipping' goes on as a rule. It is not often that you see a passenger drunk; in truth, intoxication is of rare occurrence, and a vice which the rules of the ship render difficult of practice; but people get into the habit of having 'cocktails' before and after breakfast, drinks at eleven, sherry and bitters before lunch, and so on, not to mention many incidental adjournments to the bar, when games of bull or chess or poker, and the like, are won or lost."

"This 'nipping' as you term it, can hardly serve the end of persons in search of health?"

"Hardly, indeed! but I am quite convinced that passengers do themselves more injury by over-eating than by over-drinking. Nine out of ten persons devour out and away more food on board ship than they do on shore. Of course they should eat very much less when you consider the temperature and the little exercise they take. It is anything but an agreeable sight at breakfast, say, on a hot morning in the tropics, to see people plod-

ding steadily through the bill of fare, literally surfeiting themselves, beginning, perhaps, with a plate of porridge, and then working away at fish, a mutton chop, a grilled bone, Irish stew, sausages, bacon and eggs, ham and tongue, and winding-up with a top layer of bread-and-butter and marmalade. I assure you I once at my table watched a lady make just such a breakfast as I have given you the details of. The whole bill of fare, as it stands morning after morning, accompanied by powerful flushings of tea or coffee, is by no means an unusual breakfast at sea.* As a result of all this eating and drinking, a passenger finds himself rather unwell; he doses himself, or comes to me complaining of headache and of feeling heavy and dull. Of course he attributes it all 'to the dreadful heat.' If passengers would control their appetites and limit themselves to one meal of meat a day, taking care to eat plenty of fruit and fresh vegetables, they would have very few disorders indeed to ascribe to the heat, which in fact is never very great, as you may easily ascertain by watching the thermometer."

There is much good sense, I think, in all this; and persons proposing to make a voyage, whether for health,

* The difficulty is to know what to eat—particularly at breakfast—on board ship if you are dyspeptic. Elsewhere I have given samples of the bills of fare: all the dishes excellent for people with digestive powers, but very much otherwise if those functions be feeble. The food to be avoided, according to eminent medical judgment, is—salt meat, salt fish, porridge, cheese, pastry, dried fruit, sugar, jam, raw vegetables, coffee, spirits, malt liquors, pickles, ices, curries, and pepper. Most of these things are what are offered to you by the stewards to choose from. On the other hand, what you *may* eat are—bread, toast, milk, eggs, poultry, fresh meat once cooked, suet pudding, rice and other farinaceous puddings, tea, cocoa, fresh fish, and potatoes: the more substantial items of which you don't get, such as suet pudding, fresh fish, rice puddings, etc., whilst the eggs are kept fresh only by ice, and the yield of the cow has to be helped out with preserved milk.

pleasure, or business, may thank me for the suggestions indicated in this brief chat with the doctor of the *Tartar*. I hope in due course to deal with the victualling of ocean steamers, and from the bills of fare for breakfast, lunch, and dinner which I shall probably give as illustrative of the quality of living on board ship, readers will judge that, when passengers are charged with over-eating, the accusation implies a very large volume of food for the indulgence of their voracity. Out of mere curiosity, I asked the steward what he reckoned as the average expenditure per male passenger for drinks. He answered that he would take each passenger as spending from three to four pounds a week, but in many cases the figure rose to as high as nine or ten pounds per week. This is at the rate of from two hundred to five hundred a year for liquor; and when you consider that spirits and wines are no dearer on board than they are on shore—indeed, in some ships they are cheaper—you may judge that a man who spends, say five pounds a week on drink, must contrive to stow away a pretty large liquid cargo in the course of the seven days.

Madeira seems to define the boundary line between the capricious weather north of it and the delightful climates and smooth seas south to as far as the Cape of Good Hope. I marked the change when, the island being a faint bluish smudge on the horizon, I climbed to the bridge of the *Tartar* and gazed around. The long fabric of the great vessel sped below me through the smooth dark blue waters. Our speed was a fair fourteen knots, there was nothing to stop us, and the engines were storming in a regulated thunder of sound in the metal caverns beneath, whirling with resistless velocity the giant propeller with its diameter of nineteen feet and its twenty-seven foot pitch. I gazed along the length of

three hundred and seventy-seven feet, and upon a breadth of over forty-seven feet. The shapely configuration of the thrashing and thrusting structure was thrown out in brilliantly clear black lines by the white waters seething past on either hand like the foaming race at the foot of a mountain cataract. Brass and glass flashed to the steady pouring sunshine. Looking right aft I marked the elegant curve of the elliptical stern showing sharp upon the tremulous snow-like surface that went flashing from under the counter into the tender distant blueness and faintness. There was a satin sheen upon the sea. Only the faintest fold of swell came to put a motion as of soft breathing into the powerful steamer. The sun was westering fast; layers of pearl-like clouds caught a golden tinge from the slowly crimsoning luminary upon their delicate brows. In the distance, that seemed measureless in the amazing transparency of the sweet and sunlit atmosphere, you saw the moonlike gleaming of a sail; otherwise the circle of the sea went round unbroken to the heavens, a glorious sapphire cincture east and south and north, but gathering fast in the west a reddish splendour from the approach of the sun to its liquid verge, and from the ruddy glorifying of the sky down which the orb was floating. The change from the Biscayan latitudes was strongly marked now, and felt by me more keenly even than when Madeira lay steady and rich before me, half in weeping shadow and half in sunshine, with the white houses to give an intertropical aspect to it, and its nude, dark-skinned boys, laughing, diving, and shouting out their language of the sun alongside.

I remember when the evening came down dark, and after I had stood watching the dull, cloudy light of phosphorus in the roaring surge that coiled over and

broke into milk from the vessel's bow, seating myself abaft the ladies' saloon for the shelter of it from the wind which the steamer's progress through the water was making to blow at the velocity of very nearly half a gale. An engine-room hatchway was directly in front of me, protected by gratings, and, peering down, I could see through another grating into the black depths, a distance of forty feet beneath. There were scarlet lights at the bottom; the glow of one or more of the eighteen furnaces. You could see phantom figures moving, catching, now and again as they passed from darkness into darkness, a gleam from the fires that seemed to give them an outline of flame. The effect was extraordinary. Often voices broke into song down in those mysterious, resonant depths. The shovelling of coal was incessant. By listening a little you found words distinctly articulated by the engines. You fitted the rhythmic, metallic pulsations with syllables which became a sentence that was fast repeated over and over and over again. It seemed to me as though there were some mighty giant working below there in the fire-touched darkness you saw through the gratings; he breathed harshly and heavily, often with a fierce hissing through his clenched teeth, as though the burden of his tremendous labour grew at moments too heavy for him, and he expended his impatience in a wild and bitter sigh. There were a hundred sounds to suggest the presence below of some powerful human spirit, rather than the mechanical, soulless action of beams of metal and lengths of massive steel revolved by steam. It was the heavy panting that made you think of the hidden giant.

Seated on deck with the stars shining in glory, the refreshing noises of foaming waters alongside, and the

wind sweeping past either hand of the structure that sheltered me, raising tempestuous melodies as it flew, I listened to the sounds, human and mechanical, which rose through that engine-room grating as I would to expressions of a life utterly distinct from and wholly separated from our own. The gushes of air coming up through the hatch were unendurably hot. A whole forest of windsails swinging with distended arms in the gloom, like the sheeted figures of hanged men, carried the cool wind into the region of fire beneath; but the heat, as suggested by the fervid puffings rising from the engine-room, made one wonder how men could be found capable of discharging the laborious duties of firemen and trimmers, in an atmosphere of which the merest whiff snatched from the deck oppressed and enervated the whole system.

The stokers and firemen have the hardest times of it on board ship in these days, I think. Jack inhabits a fine forecastle compared to what he used to sling his hammock in in the old times of slush lamps, blackened beams, dripping carlines, and rats as big as cats. His food, if it be not better, is surely not worse than it was, anyhow. There is nothing particular to be done aloft, at least in such three-masted schooners as the *Tartar*. There is no deep-sea lead to heave,* and the duties of the sailor are restricted to cleaning, scrubbing, and swabbing. Besides all this, he is in the fresh air when his watch comes round. But when I thought of the lot of the firemen, and of those whose day-and-night work lies in the engine-room; when I contrasted the mild delightful breezes I was breathing with that stagnant feverish atmosphere where the fire-god was doing his work; and when I listened to the incessant sounds of

* At all events, not on board the steamers I have travelled in,

shovelling, and the perpetual metallic roaring of the fabric of cylinders, piston rods, crank shafts, connecting rods, and the like revolving a propeller weighing eleven tons, I confess it was with amazement that I listened to the cheery and hearty singing of the poor fellows at their toil.

For it seemed to me that if I had to work in an engine-room I should have but small heart to pipe out even the most lugubrious ditty I am acquainted with.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MASTER'S RESPONSIBILITIES.

I HAVE often thought that if the duties, responsibilities, and anxieties of the merchant captain and mates were better understood by landsmen, we should find more dignity attaching to the red ensign than is commonly conceded to that piece of meteor bunting. The captain of a man-of-war fills a post of distinction and honour; yet consider for a little what is the title of the commander of a great ocean mail steamer to the respect and admiration of the country under whose commercial flag he sails. If his fabric, as she lies afloat, is not worth ship for ship—in money, I mean, of course—as much as an ironclad; if one vessel, for instance, costs a quarter of a million, and the other, say one hundred thousand pounds; yet it is certain that the merchantman has not to make many voyages before the actual value committed to the care of her master in cargo, specie, and in the ship herself, will outgrow the actual cost and the existing

intrinsic worth of the man-of-war, with her twelve-inch plates, costly armaments, and the rest of her fittings.

But there is another feature of the life of the master of an ocean steamer that has been brought very emphatically home to me by this voyage. I mean the ceaseless strain upon his vigilance. He is constantly afloat; and when afloat his responsibilities are endless. In a chapter in Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast," that admirable author gives, if I recollect aright, some account of the duties of a skipper of a ship in his day.* That duty seemed chiefly to consist of coming and going when he liked, of walking the weather-side of the quarter-deck, of leaving everything to the discretion of the officer of the watch, of making eight bells at noon, and of occasionally taking a star. Those were jogging times. After a voyage of four months the passengers, grateful to quit their floating prison, would subscribe and present the skipper with a piece of plate—most often a silver claret jug. One man I sailed under had had eight such jugs given him, and half of them regularly figured every day on the dinner table as a hint for more. But now! here and there, a captain will indeed show you a telescope, a binocular glass, a ring, or some such present, commonly the gift of an individual, very rarely a presentation from the passengers as a body. Voyages are probably nowadays too short for gratitude. Existence is so agreeable on board that every one is not very much obliged when

* Now fifty years ago. On referring to the book I find the passage runs thus: "The captain, in the first place, is lord paramount. He stands no watches, comes and goes when he pleases, and is accountable to no one, and must be obeyed in everything, without a question, even from his chief officer. He has the power to turn his officers off duty, and even to break them and make them do duty as sailors in the forecastle, etc." A fuller account of the master's duties is given in the same author's excellent "Seaman's Manual."

it comes to an end. The captain thrashes his great structure through the deep, he must be punctual, and more than punctual if possible; his obligations and responsibilities have increased a hundredfold, whilst I am bound to say, public recognition of the dignity of his position, the enormous powers entrusted to him, the admirable fidelity with which he discharges his duties, is so small as scarcely to be appreciable.

It was Christmas Eve. There had been much revelry in the saloon; but the sound of it had ceased, the lamps had been extinguished, and the great steamer was rushing in darkness through the night. It was pitch dark; with relief it was that you brought your eye away from the dense gloom ahead and around, to the dim whiteness of the waters sweeping past alongside, beautified with fiery stars of the sea-glow. Some cheery spirits, determined to see Christmas Eve out, were assembled on the hurricane deck, where in company they chanted choruses, which floated low and strange on the wind to the midnight music of the breeze among the shrouds and the distant thunderous sound of waters at the stem. Suddenly seven bells were struck, half-past eleven. The notes rang out clear and strong, and whilst the last chime vibrated on the ear, you heard coming cheerily out of the blackness of the forecastle head, the hoarse cry of "All's well!"

All's well! My thoughts went to the captain and his mates with that cry. The singers on the hurricane deck had stayed their voices a moment to listen to the bell; they broke out afresh when that hearty cry from the darkness forward drove past their ears. There were women and children sleeping below—many of them; the remembrance of our innocent festivities in the saloon gave a sense of abounding life to the ship which the

ceaseless working of the engines was sending storming through the pathless, liquid ebony, that seemed to vanish into the murkiness of the heavens a few fathoms past the yeasty line reeling out from the bows. All's well! I saw the dim shape of the captain on the bridge, with the figure of the mate on duty pacing to and fro, to and fro, athwart-ships. There was little to be feared from the neighbourhood of ships, less from the half-sunken obstructions of derelicts, nothing from the adjacency of land; and yet that cry of "All's well," coupled with the sounds of songs on the hurricane deck and with the memories of our glees and choruses in the saloon, and with the thought of the many passengers under my feet taking their rest, full of faith in the vigilance of the captain, and in the strength and safety of the fabric that was speeding them through the darkness, gave a profound significance to the heavy midnight gloom, and to the restless vigilance of the master, breaking from the merriment of the hour to search the night, to watch the ship, and to accentuate by his dutifulness that happy cry of "All's well."

Now, in dealing with that portion of the routine on board a mail steamer that specially involves the responsibilities and duties of her commander, I should premise that if I speak of the *Tartar*, and of her captain, it is merely because I happened to be a passenger on board that ship, and necessarily, therefore, associated with the genial, courteous, and excellent sailor in charge of her. But I wish it to be understood that, in naming the *Tartar* and her commander, I desire to instance them as types only of a calling I was once connected with, which I heartily love, and which it is my ambition to do honour to in every sentence in which I deal with it in my writings. There are scores, as we all know, of powerful

and sumptuously furnished mail and ocean passenger steamers afloat, and there is no captain of them whose large duties and grave anxieties do not correspond with those of his brother commanders. Hence, though I name a particular vessel and a particular man, I beg that the example I am about to give may be accepted as illustrative of the fabrics and duties to be found in the higher walks of the mercantile marine.

I will not dwell at much length upon my three-masted schooner-steamer, the *Tartar*. I have before me the particulars of her as sent by her builders, from which I will extract in a few words enough to indicate the extent and capacity of the vessel of which her master has sole charge. She was built in Glasgow in 1883. Her length and breadth I have already given.* Her depth is slighty over thirty feet. In gross tons her burden is a trifle above four thousand three hundred and thirty-nine. She is on the Admiralty List, and I made special inquiries as to her build and the like, as I was anxious to know what sort of vessel the Admiralty thought good enough to employ as a cruiser,

* The late W. S. Lindsay claims to have been the first to break through the old prejudice respecting length and beam. "The impression," he says, "had prevailed for centuries that a long ship must be weak, and a narrow one dangerous from her liability to capsize." In 1853 he built an iron sailing ship, which in length measured close upon seven times the width of beam. Prior to this vessels of twenty-five feet beam seldom exceeded a hundred feet in length; and the same proportions held in larger ships. Lindsay says that "such a monstrous deviation from established rules . . . created considerable discussion, mingled with many gloomy forebodings as to the result." The forebodings were not unwarranted, as regards the future. A ship eleven times longer than she is broad might well be accepted as a dismal issue of the adventurous example of the old shipowner. Yet I do not think the time far distant when we shall return, as much for speed as for safety, to dimensions having some correspondence with those, at all events, of Lindsay's day.

to arm with guns, and to start in quest of enemy's merchantmen, or for convoying. It is not so very long ago that a ship, chartered for the conveyance of troops, when dry-docked after having brought home a large number of soldiers, was found to have her rudder-post, that had been originally cast too short, lengthened with a piece of timber, painted so as to imitate iron. This craft, no doubt, had been termed in descriptions of her, "a noble and stately vessel." Applausive adjectives are cheap. To produce nobility and stateliness you must build honestly. Your angle irons should be good, your plates formed of metal considerably less brittle than glass, and in no sense "short," as the term is. There should be no blind rivet-holes; the "drift" should be rendered unnecessary; above all, your sternposts should be cast the proper length. I do not know that I should call the *Tartar* either a noble or a stately vessel, but I am confident she is a staunchly built one, and as a passenger-ship one of the best arranged and most commodious afloat. Her deck structures give her an encumbered look amidships, and I am not sure that there has been any gain in conveniency by the erection of the ladies' saloon, a beautiful cabin indeed, but in my humble judgment a piece of unnecessary top hamper. Otherwise she is a very perfect ship. Many a time when she has been pitching—perhaps to the extent of four to four and a half degrees—I have sat in her saloon in a blaze of light from her silver lamps and the reflection of her polished mirrors, and have scarcely been conscious of any movement. She is crowded with water-tight compartments in case of fire or collision; and remembering the instance of the *City of Brussels*, that foundered by being struck in a division of two compartments, whereby an immense opening was offered for the water to rush

into,* I inquired of the builders about the stability of the *Tartar*, and obtained the following information, which I think in the highest degree important to the well-being and security of passengers, as indicating the surplus of safety it is possible for the ship-wrights of a well-constructed fabric to provide in the event of that worst of all sea disasters—collision.

"In dealing," I was told, "with this point of stability, we have taken the worst case; and, assuming that Nos. 3 and 4 holds (which are the largest of all) be damaged and filled with water when floating at 26 feet 2 inches mean, before being damaged, then the surplus buoyancy would be 17·7 per cent. of the total buoyancy of the vessel, or, allowing for forecastle and erections, would be 18½ per cent. surplus buoyancy. Of course, if the cargo in that compartment be lighter than water, then the buoyancy due to it would have to be added to the above."

The draught quoted of 26 feet 2 inches represents the ship, of course, as loaded down to her disc, leaving a free board of 8 feet 5 inches. It is perhaps unnecessary to state that these ships are never freighted down to their load mark, and hence the surplus buoyancy, as stated by the builders, is far greater than the figures named. Here, then, we arrive at a high theory of safety in respect of collision in shipbuilding.

And now let us see what is expected of the commander of an ocean mail steamer. First of all—but, of course, this does not head the list of his duties—he must be regarded as the mail agent for the Government, and he is held responsible for the proper delivery of the mails received on board. In fact, he does the work that was

* A more recent though less fateful instance is the sinking of the Cunard steamer *Oregon*, through collision with a schooner.

formerly entrusted to a post-captain or commander in the Navy.

"Before leaving Southampton," said Captain Travers to me, "a Post Office journal, a mail certificate form, on which you have to state your arrival and departure at each port, your length of passage and the time allowed, and a list of Admiralty packages, are handed to you, and on arrival at Plymouth or Cape Town these documents, properly filled up, are handed in to the company's representatives, who forward them to the Postmaster-General, and if found correct the subsidy and premium for speed are paid. In all other matters the responsibilities are pretty much the same as in the ordinary sailing ship. The captain is accountable for the vessel being well and properly found in everything. At the termination of a voyage a 'Defect List' and an indent for stores for the ensuing voyage are made out by the chief officer, chief engineer, and chief steward, and submitted to him for approval. Abroad, all accounts for seamen discharged and for overtime and coal money earned by the crew must be signed for by the commander. The crew get sixpence an hour overtime working cargo after six p.m. to six a.m., and fourpence per ton is divided among the crew for shifting coals out of reserves into bunkers. The captain is furnished with a voyage report, which he has to fill up and hand in at the termination of his voyage. This is really a precise account of everything that is shipped and unshipped during the voyage, the amount of coal burned between each port, the stoppages, the average speed made; it also includes a statement that the instructions received have been strictly carried out, more especially in matters relating to cargo, and in assurance that the second and third class passengers have been visited daily. Besides this, there is an abstract

log to write up every day, showing the ship's position, run, wind, weather, sea, pressure of steam, revolutions, and coal consumed. This form is sent in at the end of each passage, and it also states the average speed, coals consumed per mile, per hour, and per hour per indicated horse-power. There is also an abstract log for the coast voyage. Then we have a blue form, a kind of mail certificate, with the stoppages at each port stated. We have also to hand in a confidential report of every officer of the ship, including engineers, surgeon, carpenter, boatswain, and chief steward. I make it a rule always to fill in all the forms myself; and by taking them in hand as we come to each port, I really have no trouble with them and do not notice the work."

The captain has also to announce his arrival at each port by letter, stating time, consumption of fuel, proposed departure, prospect of freight, and the like.

"I suppose," said I, "when you are at home you have plenty of liberty?"

"Well," he answered, "I have to dock, examine, and then undock the ship. This is done as soon as possible after the cargo is discharged every voyage. I am seldom or never away from my vessel during the time she is in port, and abroad I never sleep out of the ship."

"You tell me you thoroughly overhaul the ship in dry dock after every voyage."

"Yes."

"Is it a common custom?"

"I cannot speak for others; it is a rule with us."

"A very good rule," I exclaimed, "as excellent a method of safeguarding passengers as a company could devise. Tell me, now, of any other duties you may have."

"I will give the routine. Before leaving Southampton, and after having signed my Customs clearance, I usually ask to see the letter of instructions for the voyage. This letter tells the captain what ports he is to call at, what coal he is to take in, what his coal consumption is to be, and it gives him his dates of arrivals and departures from the different ports. The mails arrive with the passengers, and the ship then starts on her voyage for Plymouth. A Southampton pilot takes charge to 'The Needles,' and the company's pilot, together with the captain, to Plymouth Breakwater, or to the place where we may happen to pick up the Plymouth pilot. Here we receive the heavy mails, and afterwards the latest mails and despatches and the remainder of the passengers. A way-bill from the post-office authorities is given me, and, having seen my bill of health in order, we proceed on our voyage, the pilot generally being discharged when the ship is pointing to the fair way. Then begins the regular routine. A night order-book is given to the chief mate every evening at eight o'clock. It is written and signed by the commander; states the course to be steered; cautions the officers as to a vigilant look-out being kept; instructs them as to what sail to carry, what lights are to be watched for, and tells them at what hour the commander is to be called. At eight a.m., which is always reported to me, sights are taken and chronometers compared by the captain and chief officer; at nine a.m. the ship's position is worked out by the captain and second officer; at ten a.m. the second officer visits the mail-room and reports the fact to the captain. At ten a.m. every Tuesday the captain receives from the steward the wine money, sees and signs the officer's wine accounts, also store expenditure and copies of the victualling for the different parts of the ship for the past

week. At eleven a.m. the ship is inspected by the captain, chief mate, surgeon, and head steward. The places visited are the butcher's shop, the galleys, the upper and lower forecastles, pantries, saloons, bathrooms, and the sleeping cabins fore and aft. At noon the ship's position is determined by the captain, second, third, and fourth officers, the fourth mate putting in his work at one o'clock. The run is always posted up at 12.30 in the first, second, and third class saloons; at the same hour log-books are examined and signed, and the post-office journal and company's abstract are written up by the captain. The chief engineer and commander then hold a consultation respecting the speed of engines and consumption of fuel. At one o'clock, accompanied by the head steward, I inspect the dinners in the second and third class, and also the engineers' mess. At four p.m. the ship's position is verified by sights, and if we are near the land sights are often taken twice, and the position verified by Sumner's method. A star is frequently taken in the twilight after dinner, and in the morning watch whenever practicable by the chief officer. Eight o'clock is reported to me before the bell is struck, and my written orders are then issued for the night."

"How often do you verify your position?"

"Three times daily, and once or twice at night-time."

"And pray," said I, "what discretion is permitted to the officer of the watch?"

"He has the sole charge of the ship and engines in case of emergency, but he is not allowed to alter the course without my orders, unless to go clear of ships or any other dangers. He is not permitted to allow any lights to be kept in after the regulation hours without my express permission. All lights are reported to the

officer of the first watch as being extinguished at the time stated in the rules."

This may possibly seem somewhat dry reading to landsmen, but I hope they will have the patience to follow it, for by such statements alone will they be able to gather an idea of the incessant demands made upon the time and vigilance of the commanders of an ocean steamship. Of course the vast moral responsibility that weighs down on every captain is not included in this thin narrative of routine. Take the ship's company alone of such a vessel as the *Tartar*. Captain and officers number five; carpenter, boatswain, and four quartermasters, six; twenty able seamen, four ordinary seamen, three boys, six engineers, a boiler-maker and donkey-man, twenty-six firemen and trimmers, and twenty-seven stewards. Here you have a round hundred of men to do the ship's work. Now, add to these the passengers, from another hundred, if you like, up to one thousand—I once boarded a National liner on which were a thousand emigrants—and then there will be little difficulty in realizing my meaning, when I speak of the vast moral responsibility that rests upon the one man to whom is committed this most sacred trust of precious human souls. As I before said, an extraordinary change has come over the routine of the mercantile marine. The obligation of hurry, the imperious sense of urgency, has multiplied the responsibilities and greatly increased the duties of the ship-master. What they may do now in sailing ships I cannot precisely state, but the discipline and habits in the square-rigger of to-day cannot be very widely different from what they were in the old clippers and sailing liners twenty or thirty years ago. Then it was all plain sailing, indeed. The captain shot the sun, or took a star; his face shone

rubicund at the head of the cuddy table; perhaps you might see him in a tall hat and goloshes, walking up and down the deck in the morning watch, whilst the men washed down; but I cannot say that I ever heard of him going the rounds of the ship, looking into people's bedrooms to see that they were clean, counting the live stock, or writing down his instructions for the night. The chief and second mate had watch and watch, both of them with the captain took the altitude of the sun at noon, and though gales of wind brought their excitement, and though there were a thousand jobs connected with the rigging and hull incessantly demanding attention, yet there was a certain drowsiness in the old discipline, a sort of humdrumness that seemed to steal into the ship's inner life out of her motherly round bows, her studding-sail booms, and heavy courses, which has been utterly extinguished by the pounding of the marine engine and the iron threshing of the propeller.

Steam has indeed worked an extraordinary transformation. I was not at all surprised when Captain Travers informed me that old sailors who have been passengers with him were lost in wonder at the novelty of the customs and discipline practised in the steamship. A reference, indeed, to the daily routine in a few particulars under the heading of this chapter may not be deemed out of place. For instance, I find the chief mate has all day on deck and "all night in"—that is, he superintends all the deck work from four a.m. till eight p.m. In the Channel the officers watch in couples —the first and fourth together and the second and third together, four hours on and four hours off. But after leaving Ushant the third mate takes from eight till noon; the fourth (after leaving latitude thirty-two degrees North) noon till one p.m., the second mate has from one

till five p.m., whilst the chief mate is supposed to look-out from five till six, but, as a matter of fact, the third and fourth mates take it in turns to keep the dinner look-out. So much for the officers. Seamen, or "deck hands," as they are called, keep watch and watch throughout the voyage. The ordinary seamen and boys are on all day and in all night. In all harbours on the coast (Cape Town Docks excepted) there are always one quartermaster and one able seaman on watch from eight p.m. till six a.m. At sea an able seaman keeps a look-out for two hours when the mast-head lamp is hoisted, and comes off when called by the officer in charge at daybreak. Bells are struck every half-hour and called. Every hour from ten p.m. till five a.m. the quartermasters visit the whole ship and report to the officer on watch. A further duty of a mate in charge after he is relieved in the middle-watch is to visit the passenger deck, fore and aft, and the chief mate does the same every morning and evening before reporting eight bells to the captain.

There are many old square-riggers, old tacks-and-sheets men, who will be curious to know what there is for Jack on board a steamer to put his hand to. The *Tartar* has fidded fore and main top-masts, but they might be derricks for all the good they are for sailing purposes. Until I learned the truth I would often wonder when I gazed aloft what sort of work was expected of the twenty able seamen, four ordinary seamen, and three boys, who constituted the strictly marine element in the ship's forecastle. Where steamers carry yards they sheet home and hoist away very often to the tune of the old familiar songs; but here we had nothing to spread but shoulder of mutton canvas; the rigging was set up with screws, and required no attention; there

was little risk of the ratlines carrying away, because it was the rarest thing in the world for a man to mount the shrouds.

However, I soon found out that if there was nothing to be done on high there was plenty for Jack to attend to below. Let me submit a few items taken here and there from the list of daily routine as it was made out for me by Mr. Reynolds, the chief mate. They begin at half-past three in the morning by putting on closed bunker lids and by leading the hose along ready for washing down. At four o'clock the watch "turns to," scrubbing with sand or with holystone, while the boys clean brass work. More scrubbing goes on at six, and a great deal of washing of wood-work at half-past seven. Then at eight o'clock the watch is relieved and the watch below comes up and falls to cleaning wood-work fore and aft. From nine o'clock onwards boats are cleaned, rigging repaired if necessary, ironwork chipped, wood-work cleaned and varnished, awnings doctored, sails repaired, and so forth. Then I find that besides all this cleaning, varnishing, chipping, and the rest of it, the men have to work sluices and bulk-head doors, rig bilge pumps, oil the iron work, black the cables, exercise at fire and boat stations, wash clothes, and sweep the decks. They get grog on Saturday at eight o'clock in the evening. An old sailor might wonder what the mariner has to do on board steamers, but I confess I never saw the watch idle for an instant. There were some sturdy old fists amongst them, with faces like the shell of a walnut, all wrinkles and weather. Some of them had been men-of-warsmen, and if any one of them had occasion to go aloft, he would run up the rigging inside the shrouds, clawing the ratlines; a practise good for landsmen to admire, but one at which a slow-going

merchantman is pretty sure to gaze askant.* I learned on the whole, from watching the sailors on board the *Tartar*, to feel a higher respect than I had before been sensible of for what are termed "steamboat men." I fancy that, with very few exceptions, the crew of this steamer—all of them Englishmen—would have proved themselves good men for any kind of craft they had chosen to "sign on" for.

CHAPTER V.

BOATS AND STORES.

In these days of ingenious and in many cases valuable marine inventions, it is inexcusable if a ship be sent to sea unfurnished with the best of those life-saving appliances which numerous able and laborious inventors have submitted to owners. But it does very often happen that when a shipwreck occurs a score of refuges and contrivances for life-saving which ought to be aboard are wanting. Boats are stowed bottom up, and the ship sinks before they can be cleared and got over the side; or they hang in davits through which it is found they are too long to be swung when the tragical moment comes for their employment; or when lowered the plugs for the holes are missing, and a shoe or a hat has to be used for a baler; or possibly there are no oars, or if there be oars then the thole pins or rowlocks are missing. Perhaps the mast when raised will not step, and what should be a good fit has to be doctored jury fashion.

* This has been misunderstood. What I meant was, no sailor in his senses will ever trust a ratline.

The falls will not travel; the clip-hooks are a cheap and inferior patent. There may be no breakers, and when the boat is sent adrift in a hurry, full of people, her unfortunate occupants are without a drop of water. Nor are provisions thought of, for everything is left to the last and to chance. In the same way when a man falls overboard from a certain kind of ship there is seldom anything at hand to immediately heave to him. A hen-coop is not a thing you can pick up and aim with, and a lifebuoy if securely seized to the rail is of very little use to a drowning man, unless you happen to have a big sharp knife to cut and hack away with before he is a mile astern. In the very earliest days of the Navy there was always plenty of discipline and drill in respect of life-saving. Boats had their crews, and every boat could be properly lowered to the first alarm given. There were contrivances too for night and day use; and if a man fell overboard from a man-of-war, there was, as there is and always will be, a very good chance of his being rescued. But in the Merchant Service there has been deplorable neglect in this direction. Owners required an Act of Parliament to oblige them to furnish sufficient boats and buoys. The Act, of course, does not go nearly far enough. There are scores of vessels afloat licensed to carry passengers in numbers preposterously in excess of the means supplied for preserving life in the event of disaster. The worst illustration under this head may be selected from amongst the short-service steamers and pleasure vessels. You find yourself on board a steamer of say three hundred and fifty tons burden. You are one of four hundred passengers; and when you cast your eyes around to note what chance you would have for your life in case of stranding or collision or fire, you discover two or three boats snugly secured and carefully

hidden away under painted canvas covers, with perhaps three or four lifebuoys of an ancient and mouldy appearance, so fastened to whatever they may hang to that, unless the seizings should fortunately happen to be rotten, a number of precious minutes would be wasted in efforts to cast them adrift.

When a landsman embarks in a ship it is possible indeed that he may at the start let his fancy run a little upon the risks of the sea. Thoughts of collision, of all the different disasters he has heard and read of, may cross his mind. But it is strange if he gives much heed to the provisions on board against sea perils. He glances at the boats, at the lifebuoys, at any of the patent self-acting contrivances which may chance to be about; he hears of hoses for extinguishing fire, of iron doors for cutting off parts of the ship from one another. But, as I have said, he looks superficially into these matters, and when he steps ashore at the end of the passage he carries with him but the vaguest ideas as to what would have been his and his fellow-passengers' chances had any one of the misfortunes set forth in narratives of shipwreck and disasters at sea befallen his vessel.

There can be no question that of late years the Merchant Service in its higher walks has realized a condition of equipment and drill for purposes of safeguarding human life that comes very near to the practice and discipline of the Royal Navy. The determination of the directors of the great steam companies to furnish their vessels with the best appliances for life-saving that are to be had deserves at least appreciative recognition. The Act is express so far as it goes; yet the owners might, if they chose, secure themselves by keeping well within the law, and still send their ships to sea so equipped that if a vessel were to sink scores of persons

must perish simply from lack of means for preserving their lives.*

Accepting the *Tartar* as typical only, and being well assured that her general apparatus for the protection of passengers in case of accident, and the system of drilling regularly practised throughout every passage are very similar to what is to be found in most mail and ocean passenger boats after her pattern, I was resolved to inquire closely into this feature of what I still wish to call the inner life of a ship, so that passengers bound away in vessels owned by any of the great well-managed lines might have the satisfaction of judging what sort of protection they can in these days depend upon directors and builders offering them in the event of their steamer being overtaken by one of the many accidents which the utmost foresight cannot possibly provide against.

There is not perhaps in these times of iron the same sort of significance to be attached to fire that was found in it in the days of wooden ships. Still fire at sea, on board no matter what kind of vessel, whether a little timber-built coaster or the biggest metal fabric ever launched, is a circumstance full of horror and dread; and panic or ignorance in the art of using the appliances designed for the extinction of flames may easily render it a frightful calamity, and convert the structure of the handsomest and staunchest steam palace into as awful a theatre for human suffering and despair as ever was the deck of an *Amazon* or a *Kent*. What security, then, do the large ocean steamships offer to passengers against this most lamentable risk?

* No doubt passenger steamers should carry more boats than they usually sling. The difficulty, it is said, lies in finding room for as many boats as the accommodation for passengers renders needful.

In the case of the *Tartar*—a name that may safely stand for many other fine ships—I find that on the main deck there are two deliveries on the port side, and one on the starboard side. They are connected with the engine room, and can be worked by two pumps on the main engine, and an independent steam donkey. The hoses and branches are stowed in sacks alongside the delivery pipes; they are always kept ready for instant use, and are long enough to reach to any of the compartments. On the upper deck there are three deliveries, one amidships, one forward, and one aft. These are connected with the same engines as those which work the other deliveries, and they, too, have hoses and branches stowed in readiness alongside of them. In addition there is a portable Downton pump, and two best navy pumps, as they are called. They all three throw a very large mass of water, and are unquestionably first-rate pumps. Additional security is found in a large auxiliary boiler, carried amidships, by which, in the event of anything happening to the boilers, or any breakdown occurring in the engine-room, the pumps can be worked, whether for a fire or for a leak. The navy pumps are so contrived that they may be turned off from the sea and put on the hold. The 'midship pump connects with No. 1 hold and boiler room, and the after one of the same pattern with No. 3 hold and engine room.

"There are ten suctions," said the commander, "in the different wells, which can be worked by either the two bilge pumps and the donkey from the main engines, or by the donkey engine from the boiler on deck. Then there are also two large centrifugal pumps which can be used on the bilges in the event of the ship holing herself above the double bottom."

This, of course, refers to leakage; yet fire is also to be dealt with by these appliances.

"In case of a suction," he continued, "getting choked, we could let the water run into the next compartment, as each bulkhead is fitted with sluice-valves of twenty-six inches area, which are worked from the deck. I should tell you that the sluices and pumps are worked at least once a week, also all water-tight doors on the main deck, engine room, boiler room, and coal-bunkers; and entries respecting them are made by the chief officer and chief engineer in the log-books."

I asked what were the customs as to drill and muster.

"When," was the answer, "the men sign articles they agree to muster and go through their fire and boat drill on the day previous to sailing from England. So in the morning of the day, as agreed, the men assemble, the watches are called, and then all are told off to their respective stations. This is called the captain's muster. An hour later the whole crew are again mustered, put through their drill, and piped down. The ship is then inspected and steam ordered. We have fire and boat drill regularly once a week at sea. The chief officer sees that the men are at their stations and reports the fact to me. The pumps are tried, and the third mate visits the main deck, and observes that the hands are at their places there by the water-tight doors. The crew are then told off to their respective boats, and after the chief mate has noted that the men are at their proper places, six of the boats are swung out and in. In the tropics two of the lifeboats are swung out and in every evening."

I witnessed this drill many times, and was always pleased and impressed by it. The men to the boatswain's pipe and hoarse cry tumbled aft swiftly and

nimbly. You could see that, at a time of danger, how custom was sure to prevail and form the deeply-needed discipline, by the instinctive promptness with which every man sprung to his proper post. In truth, it was not a little re-assuring when the eye sought the mightiness of the deep, and the mind went to the crowd of human beings on board the ship, to mark the man-of-war-like discipline that these plain merchant sailors fell into to the tune of the boatswain's call; to observe the swiftness with which they swung out each large and powerful lifeboat over the side clear to its falls; and to hearken to the furious gushing of the thick streams of water from the hoses, ready in a breath to be pointed to a flame the instant it was discovered.

The davits with which the *Tartar* is fitted are something entirely new to me, and I consequently watched their action with curiosity. They lean from the rail inboards, so that the boats hanging at them have their keels resting on chocks within the rail. By means of a wheel and a screw each davit is worked forwards to the side, necessarily carrying the boat with it, so that the gear ends in leaving the boat lifted clear of her chocks and hanging fair over the water. The appliance is ingenious, and I think valuable. It saves the troublesome slewing of the davits, and also enables the boat to hang outside the davits and yet inside the rail. Continuing my questions, I inquired of the captain what life-saving appliances he had besides his boats.

"Well," said he, "we have a lifebuoy termed Jones' patent. It falls with a weighted staff and a red flag in the daytime, and at night it burns a Holme's light. There are two of these, one aft on the taffrail and one under the bridge. On the upper bridge, hurricane deck, upper deck, and about the stern there are many lifebuoys

hanging in cleats. They are lifted just as you take your hat off a peg, and dropped overboard."

"How many boats have you?"

"Six lifeboats, three cutters, and one mailboat. The lifeboats are 28ft. long and 7ft. 6in. beam, and I have calculated that the ten boats could accommodate, in all, four hundred and twenty-five persons, allowing fifty people to each lifeboat, and thirty-five to each of the three cutters.* The boats are fitted with gear far in excess of the requirements of the law, and they are ready for lowering at a moment's notice."

"How about taking charge of them in case of having to abandon the ship?"

"I, as commander, would take number one starboard lifeboat; the four mates have charge of other boats and cutters; the boatswain, carpenter, and three quartermasters would take command of the remainder."

"Each person having charge would, of course, know what boat to enter?"

"Certainly. Here in this list you have a catalogue of boat stations, and the names of the crew of each boat. There can be no confusion. Our instructions are exceedingly simple in case of leaving the ship. It is the duty of the officers to see their respective boats ready for lowering, and to guard against any one entering or attempting to lower a boat without the captain's personal order. Then, the surgeon, head steward, cooks, head waiter, baker, and butcher, get water and provisions

* I do not know how many persons this ship is equipped to carry, but more, no doubt, than four hundred and twenty-five. Liberally as she is stocked with boats, it is manifest they could not preserve all the lives that might be found on board the vessel. There is no room for more boats; rafts I consider worthless, save in dead calms; but an ample life-saving apparatus might easily be contrived by the adoption of folding boats, or of stowing boats one inside another.

ready, and see that each boat is victualled. The duty of procuring compasses, books, nautical instruments, lamps, matches, blue lights, rockets, and so forth rests with the officers in command of the boats."

"Are your boats ready watered?"

"Yes. The breakers are always kept filled. Each officer sees to his boat in this respect. The breakers are refilled once a week, that the water, in case of sudden emergency, might be found sweet. With regard to provisions, the lifeboats are all fitted with two air-tight galvanised iron tanks, in which may be stored the necessary articles of food. The boats pull ten oars double banked, and under every man's seat there is hung a lifebelt formed of cork."

I trust that these facts may be found not without interest. For my part I was extremely curious, before I embarked on this voyage, to know what foresight was to be witnessed on board ocean steamships in regard to the supplementary conditions of the passengers' and crew's safety. Breakers might lie in the boats; but were they kept filled so that water should be there for the shipwrecked people to drink, no matter how furious might be the panic at the last, how hopeless the confusion, how mad the hurry? Were there persons appointed to see that every boat was properly victualled before being sent adrift from the sinking or the stranded craft? Were officers rendered responsible for the proper equipment of boats, so that the occupants should not find out when too late that rowlocks were missing, that oars were gone, that there was no rudder, or, if a rudder, no yoke or tiller to control it with; that there was a mast, but no sail, or a sail, but no mast? These matters are rightly ordered in the great Lines; yet the companies cannot too strongly insist upon the necessity of captains

and mates taking the same sort of interest in their life-boats that they would feel if they knew they would have to use them for the preservation of their own and the passengers' lives within the next few hours. One may be, at all events, quite sure that the traveller would always most gladly and eagerly use those steamers whose staunchness of build and agreeableness of internal decoration are supplemented by the strictest habits of discipline, and, therefore, by familiar usage in the handling of the ship's boats, in the watering and provisioning of them, and in the preservation of their sea-worthiness as structures ready at any hour of the day or night for immediate use.

It is possible, however, that the reader may conclude I have exhibited too much curiosity in the direction of life-saving appliances, and that I should have done better by talking about the steward and the cook, and the bills of fare. A passenger steamer is indeed a kind of hotel, and obviously among the most important personages on board of her must be the head steward and the cook, the two powers who rule the tables of the saloon, and who supply us with the most welcome of all breaks in the monotony of sea existence. The head steward must needs be a feature of weight and moment in the internal economy of the ship. The popularity of the vessel must depend a very great deal upon him. Ill-chosen and badly-cooked provisions, a meagre table, and indifferent wines will be remembered to the prejudice of a vessel when the lively gratitude inspired by the commander's able management in foul weather and amid dangerous seas has long ago faded out.

I could never gaze at the head steward of the *Tartar* without an emotion of respect not unmingled with awe. Care lay dark in every seam in his face. How should it

have been otherwise? He had a number of stewards under him who needed close watching. He had two cooks, a butcher, and a baker to confer with, remonstrate with, and quarrel with. I remember a man once complaining to me that his father allowed him but one hundred a year, which was all he had to live upon. "For, consider," said he, "that there are in one year alone not only three hundred and sixty-five breakfasts, but three hundred and sixty-five luncheons and three hundred and sixty-five dinners!" But think of an official having every day whilst he is at sea to provide three sets of breakfasts for the three classes of passengers, two dinners and a luncheon, a dinner, and two teas and two suppers.

"It is not," exclaimed the steward to me, in a voice broken by emotion, "as if there was a Meat Market over the side where, if I was at a loss to know what change of dish to offer I could purchase what I wanted."

In this lies every head steward's difficulty. A certain amount of provisions is put on board, and out of what there is a man has to provide as good a dinner as you would get at an excellent *table d'hôte* ashore. How it is done beats my time; but it *is* done. Whence the conclusion must necessarily be that head stewards are natural geniuses, born to move in culinary and gastronomic spheres where plenty reigns, where tinned stuffs are unknown, and where there are no shipboard limitations to obstruct a choice and expansive taste.

I will ask the reader to bear with me for a moment, whilst I give him examples of the character of a few of the meals furnished to first, second, and third class passengers on board my three-masted schooner. Here are three saloon breakfast illustrations:—

1. Bloaters, mutton chops, grilled ham, devilled

turkey, Irish stew, savoury omelettes, curry and rice, porridge, and potatoes.

2. Fried fish, mutton chops, minced veal, liver and bacon, sausages, devilled bones, curry and rice, boiled eggs, porridge, and potatoes.

3. Haddock, grilled rump steak, eggs and bacon, chicken and rice, grilled bones, Irish stew, and so on.

For samples of a second-class breakfast:—

1. Fried fish, mutton chops, boiled eggs, porridge, and potatoes.

2. Haddock, grilled steak, eggs and bacon, porridge, and potatoes.

This, in my time, would have been thought an exceptionally fine repast to serve in a cuddy where they charged you seventy and ninety guineas for a cabin. For the third class the head steward manages to make out a plentiful meal of Irish stew, salt fish, steak, hashed meats, and porridge without limit. As an example of a saloon luncheon, the bill of fare offered soup, two *entrées*, potatoes, cold meats of every description, and when I questioned the steward, he told me that in hot weather he gives brawn, pressed tongue, raised pies, cold poultry, fish, four kinds of pastry, fruit, and salads.

How is it done? I have before me a list of the dry and wet stores on board the vessel, and, on looking over it, I still find myself saying, "How is it done?" For, take such a saloon dinner as this: Vegetable soup, jugged hare and currant jelly, *côtelettes de veau au jambon*, corned beef and carrots, roast goose and savoury sauce, roast leg of mutton and currant jelly, prawn curry, boiled and baked potatoes, cauliflowers and turnips, tapioca pudding, Madeira cake, jam tartlets, and assorted dessert. This, one might suppose, should satisfy the most exacting of passengers on board ship; but indeed

it is the liberality I note in the feeding of the second and third class that impresses me most. It was far otherwise in the long-voyage days. I have seen the steerage passengers, as we then called the third class people, hanging about the ship's galley with hook-pots in their hands, waiting to receive their disgusting dose of so-called pea-soup, their hard, unmasticable "dollop" of salt-horse or pork, their frightful pudding of dark flour and the skimmings of the coppers. Now I find them sitting down every day to a good joint, with plenty of vegetables; and a hearty pudding, which the children enjoy twice a week, with jam or marmalade from time to time, and as much biscuit and cheese as they can eat every evening. As a sample of a second-class dinner I note:

1. Soup, roast mutton, boiled fowl, steak pie, two vegetables, and two kinds of pastry.

2. Soup, roast goose, roast mutton, curry and rice, vegetables and pudding.

The list of stores does not tell me how it is done. I observe spices, sugar, all sorts of groceries, all sorts of cheesemongery, all sorts of tinned provisions. I also find one cow, thirty sheep, twelve dozen ducks, twelve dozen fowls, twenty-four geese, and eighteen turkeys. Then there is dead stock kept in the ice-room, such as one thousand six hundred pounds of fresh beef, four sheep carcases, two hundred pounds of pork, suet, sausages, and poultry. I also note five tons of potatoes, along with a plentiful list of parsnips, carrots, onions, turnips, and such vegetables. The endless bills of fare are manufactured out of this list, and the steward has only his store-rooms and the butcher's shop to go to. All that we eat is sailing along with us—an obvious truth! Yet still it leaves me wondering when I look at the long and liberal *menus* how it is done.

I recollect the steward taking me, at my request, to see his store-rooms. They were well forward under the forecastle; the ship was pitching heavily at the time, and every moment the scuttles were veiled by the dark green water, leaving us in a sort of forest twilight, amid which I could faintly discern puzzling shapes of bins full of sugar, oatmeal, peas, coffee; vast blocks of tobacco; with hams grinning like sculptured effigies in battens under the ceiling. In the ice-house, upon lumps of ice, twenty-five tons in all, lay a sort of field-of-battle of dead beef, mutton, veal, pork, fowls, tongues, geese, turkeys, rabbits, hares, not to mention large landed estates of salads, cucumbers, radishes, tomatoes, lettuce, apples, and many other such things. In the wine room there stood up before me, amid the green glimmer, dusky outlines of racks full of bottles, bins full of soda and other waters, casks of rum which bore the appearance of immensely fat men crouching in a drunken posture as the dim lantern, held by an attendant, shone faintly upon the objects, and mingled its flickering yellow lustre with the startling tints alternating from the brightness of the blue sky, sifting in a weeping light through the draining glass of the scuttles, and from the veiling green rush of the head sea rising, roaring, above those port-holes to the heavy plunging of the great driven steamer.

Vessels in the trade in which the *Tartar* is engaged hardly require a refrigerating room. An ice-house seems to achieve all that is necessary in the way of preserving articles of provisions both out and home. At all events the ice-house does not offer the risk of a breakdown. This sometimes happens in the refrigerating room. The steward gave me an instance of a West India steamer that had to put in to Lisbon because of some failure in the freezing compartment. All the dead meat she had

was hove overboard, and at great inconvenience a place had to be found amidships for the reception of a quantity of live stock.

It is not very wonderful that the typical chief steward should be found carrying a grave face about with him. The baker comes and tells him that all the yeast has turned bad. A capsizal in the galley may drive him to his wits' ends. Then the constant destruction of crockery in heavy weather is a perpetual torment to him. My steward told me that one day, in an unusually heavy lurch, everything contained in the fiddles pitched through the railed opening down to where the main deck cabins are. The smash was awful, and the tables were clean swept. Cruet stands and their bottles, knives, forks, glasses, dessert dishes, several varieties of fruit, salt cellars, flowers, and the rest of the furniture you find on a dinner table before the meal is served, rolled their messes of oil, mustard, and the like, their fragments of glass and china, to and fro in a heart-subduing manner, and with sounds to which the shouts of the irritated waiters imparted a distracting edge. I asked the steward what was the average of breakages during a voyage, and he answered about twenty-five pounds. I suspect the companies require to keep a sharp eye on this victualling and provisioning department of their ships. I said to the steward—

"You have had great experience in the West India and other lines; can you suggest any further measures than are now in force to secure directors against the frauds which may be perpetrated by dishonest servants?"

He thought awhile, and then said, "No. The rules were such that he didn't believe the meanest rogue living could find a loophole in them."

As a sample of robberies which dishonest men will commit when a chance offers, I was told of a steward who sneaked a quantity of wine and spirits aboard a vessel, and sold his own stuff instead of the Company's. But, as I have said in a previous paper, the waiters and bedroom stewards have a hard time of it. At 4.30 every morning they have to scrub down, and they are rarely off their legs from that hour up to eleven o'clock at night. I used to notice the feverish eagerness with which the wearied fellows extinguished the lamps at ten o'clock, and the sort of new life they infused into themselves to roll up the carpets and to prepare the saloon for the morning's wash down, in order to get to bed. However, many of them manage pretty well in the matter of payment. They sign, indeed, for a mere trifle; but the "tips" frequently amount to a considerable sum, and several instances were given to me of under-stewards who in this way received more money than the chief mate's pay amounted to.* Another question I took some interest in was the quantity of fresh water carried, and the means of producing more in case of a breakdown and a long detention at sea. I was told that the *Tartar* leaves England with about seventy-two tons (over sixteen thousand gallons), and during the voyage takes in ninety-four tons (over twenty-four thousand gallons). Besides this she has a condenser, capable of producing hundreds of gallons a day.

And now a final word as to Jack's dietary. Sometime ago a friend of mine, Captain Crutchley, commanding one of the finest of the New Zealand Company's boats, in the course of a chat over old times, told me that in his service the crew got Irish stew for breakfast, with plenty of fresh meat and a good pudding for dinner.

* £18 a month, I believe.

Vessels which carry frozen carcases as a portion of their cargo would probably find fresh meat as cheap to serve out to the men as the traditional beef and pork. But what is the general rule? How is Jack commonly fed in the great ocean steamers? The experiences I am relating have taught me that on the whole there has been no great change since the days of tacks and sheets. I had suspected as much; yet I confess I was not a little disappointed to find my conjectures right. Directors and managing owners are astonishingly law-abiding in their relations with forecastle life. I still find each man getting his one pound and a half of salt horse and his one pound and a quarter of fossilized pig, his half pound of flour, his one-third of a pint of peas, his quarter of an ounce of tea, his half ounce of coffee, his weekly one pound of sugar, and his daily three quarts of water. When he gets butter one pound of meat only is allowed, and he is supplied with a little caulker of rum on Saturday nights only.* Here in this matter of rum the old

* Sailors are accused of drunkenness. But the mere circumstance of their being at sea for many months in the year, and never getting a drop of spirits to drink when at sea, should prove them the most temperate community of men in the world. Nautical readers will smile at the following verses taken from some doggerel rhymes (by a ship's carpenter), levelled at most things, but in particular at the food served out to crews:—

"I snubb'd skipper for bad grub—
Rotten flour to eat—
Hard tack full of weevils—Lord!
How demon chandlers cheat!
Salt junk like mahogany,
Scurvying man and boy;
Says he, 'Where's your remedy?'
Board of Trade, ahoy!

"Can ye wonder mutiny
Lubber-like will work
In our mercantile marine
Crammed with measley pork?

rule was no doubt more to Jack's taste—that cheerful custom, I mean, of serving out a "tot of grog" every day at noon, and of splicing the main brace periodically in foul weather when reefing topsails had found some heavy work for the men's hands, and when the air was full of ice and frost, and the dark forecastle and every rag of clothes in it dripping wet. However, justice obliges me to say that the crew of the particular ship I am dealing with were better off, in spite of the strict adherence to Board of Trade regulations, than those who sailed the seas in other times. Better off perhaps than are the sailors in many ships and steamers at this moment afloat, because, so the steward told me, they "came in" for sundry pickings from the tables of the passengers, whilst a particular service such as a quarter-master or seaman could render in his watch below would be rewarded by a fresh mess.

"Is it wonderful that men
Should lose their native joy
With provisions maggotty?
Board of Trade, ahoy!

"Oh! had we a crew to stand
By when we're ashore,
Show this horrid stuff that pigs
Even would abhor!
Sue the swindling dealer,
Who'd our health destroy;
What say ye, O sailor friends?
Board of Trade, ahoy!"

CHAPTER VI.

PASSED THE CANARIES.

WHILST we have been examining the life-saving appliances, penetrating the thunderous bows to inspect the steward's store-rooms, and overhauling the hidden features of the vessel, she has been steadily steaming on at rates varying from twelve to thirteen and a half knots an hour. The island of Madeira lies leagues distant astern of us, and the great Atlantic spreads its boundless surface, blue, brilliant, and beautiful, from under our stem into the distant splendour of the heavens. Regularly at noon Captain Travers ogles the sun through his sextant, with a clouded face; he cannot be sure of his run; he has the skipper's proverbially misgiving soul. The ship may have been stopped a mile an hour by some subtle current or by some capricious action of the deep obnoxious to the enthusiasm of a man whose heart is in his mail-room. Yet as regularly as the sights are worked out the countenance of the commander clears, for the run is a good one; three hundred and fourteen perhaps, sometimes rising to three hundred and twenty-four, and sometimes to three hundred and twenty-nine. To be sure, in the face of the Atlantic expresses, these speeds look small enough. But then we must remember that here is a voyage lasting over three weeks; in other words, it is three times as long as the Atlantic passage. Madeira provides a rest of two or three hours only. For the remainder of the time the engines are grinding without intermission. Nor should it be forgotten that orders are given to the captains of vessels carrying mails and

passengers to South African ports not to exceed a certain consumption of coal per day. Captain Travers told me that, had he full powers in this respect, there were times when he could have easily worked the ship up into a couple of knots an hour faster than she was then travelling.

We had many arguments, spun many a long four-stranded, left-handed twister together; conversed about the old sailing days, of early struggles, of vanished shipmates, dear to memory as associates in our youthful pranks, our light-hearted revelries, and of the cold or scorching labours of the mariner's vocation. On the bridge once, and after surveying the large fabric of the steamer, lifting her swelling bows crowned with a high top-gallant forecastle to a moderate head swell, I talked with the commander of the manœuvring of these huge long iron structures under various conditions of weather.

"Sometime ago," said I, "I was at Plymouth, and fell into a conversation with an old Scotch captain, who was overseeing a little barque in dry dock there. He told me that a few evenings before he was sitting in the smoking-room of a Liverpool hotel when a couple of shipmasters belonging to two of the great Anglo-American lines entered, and after a while got into an argument on the subject of heaving a long steamer to in a gale of wind. One of them, he said, stated that he had never yet been obliged to heave his ship to, but that were he reduced to such a pass he would stop the engines and let her take up her own position. The other commander said no, he had twice been forced to heave his ship to, and he found the safest way to do so was to put his helm up and let her go before it with the engines at dead slow. The sea underran her handsomely, and she rose and fell with dry decks. 'Now,' said my Plymouth friend

to me, 'what do you think of the change that has come over the marine profession when you hear of a ship-master advocating scudding as a method of heaving to?'"

Captain Travers laughed. "It sounds queer, dõesn't it?" said he.

"How would you heave-to?" said I.

"I should keep her bows on to sea," he answered. "But let me give you an experience. I was crossing the Bay in the memorable gale of September 1st, 1883, when a heavy sea lifted the after davit of the first cutter out of its socket. You may guess the volume and altitude of that sea by observing the height at which these boats are suspended. The boat, of course, was lost, but the chain-span held the davit alongside the ship, and this great piece of metal struck the plating continuously, at times very heavily indeed. Fearing that a rivet or even a butt would be started, or that the span might carry away, and possibly, though not probably, foul the propeller, I stopped the engines, in order to get our dangerous customer inboard. The result was simply marvellous. The ship, down to this moment, had been plunging heavily, and burying her lee-side in the water, shipping green seas right fore and aft on both sides. But when the engines were stopped the vessel brought the wind and sea about four points on the bow, and lay perfectly quiet, the spray only blowing over her. We lay like this for about three-quarters of an hour and then, having got the davit in, went on ahead, when the same violent plunging, and straining, and lurching recommenced. The wind was N.W. ½ W., and the ship steering N.E. At four a.m. the close-reefed fore topsail —we then carried square yards forward—blew away with a report like that of a cannon. At eight a.m. the foresail

that was being reefed and hanging in its gear vanished in thunder like so much smoke. If," added the commander, "I ever encounter a heavy gale in the South Atlantic, and want to heave-to, I shall certainly try the method of stopping the engines. But this could not be done in the Bay, as the ship would drift too far down into the bight to render the manœuvre safe."

In this fashion the captain and I kill what little leisure he has to spare me. Meanwhile the steamer with a ceaseless roaring at her stem, speeds onwards through many a beautiful ocean picture of sunny light and star-clad darkness. Madeira passed, and the month being December, there comes a keen delight in sitting on deck. The early heat of the sun is sweet as cordial to nerve, brain, and limb. The sea is a deep blue, with a breeze warm as a baby's breath, and as fragrant, and with weight enough to curl the head of each sea into a line of shining snow that furnishes an exquisite contrast to the violet hollows into which the foam falls with a hundred fragments of rainbow irradiating its descent. The water washes past in cream, and the bow wave on either hand slings its glittering masses to the windward surges, where they leap colliding to the sun in a million crystals, or lace the smooth backs of the leeward billows with dissolving traceries of marvellously delicate and fragile conformation. Or it may be that the deep goes smooth as the surface of a lens to the clear sea-line darkened over the port bow by a bank of raining cloud, flushed with the kaleidoscopic hues you find in the pearly insides of shells, shifting and glimmering upon their higher reaches; whilst upon the weather beam are the white shoulders of vapour whose extremities are hidden beyond. They so resemble ships that a young lady steals up to me, and in a voice subdued by the

beauty of the sight, asks if I am *quite* certain they are not a squadron of men-of-war bearing down upon us under all canvas? Or, again, there comes an evening with a hint of the Tropics in the hard brightness of the heavens. There is a glow as of copper under the rayless palpitating sun that seems to fling no lustre down upon the deep, which runs to it in a pale blue sea, darkening out on either hand into delicate slate, whilst here and there the ocean line melts into the sky. You lose the continuity of the circle, and think that the gloom of the night, like advancing bodies of crawling mist, is creeping in fragments and blotting out the daylight in bits at a time.

Off Cape Blanco I was provided with an illustration of one of the strongest contrasts in respect to the transformation that has been wrought at sea which I had heretofore encountered. This came in the shape of the heaving of the lead. It was possible to look aloft at naked masts uncrossed by yards; to gaze over the side and observe the fabric under your feet flying forwards in the teeth of a strong wind, at a speed of thirteen knots an hour; and find nothing strikingly novel in the spectacle. But when one talks of taking a cast of the lead, the mind does not readily accommodate itself to the notion of finding bottom from a vessel storming along at a pace that gives her a run of over three hundred miles in twenty-four hours. Soundings are now had from the deck of a steamer, whether travelling at thirteen or at twenty miles an hour; and they could be obtained, I dare say, if she could be made to steam at fifty miles an hour. It was the first time, indeed, that I had ever seen Sir William Thomson's sounding machine used, and I watched the action of the beautiful invention with the deepest interest and admiration. We

were off Cape Blanco, and where the lead was hove the chart showed a depth of thirty-six fathoms. There is a drum fixed well aft, fitted with a break cord, and wound around this drum are three hundred fathoms of exceedingly fine, but extraordinarily strong wire. At the extremity of this wire there is fastened a very heavy iron sinker, "armed," as the old-fashioned deep sea lead is—that is to say, furnished with a lump of sticky substance for showing the character of the bottom. At a short distance from the sinker there is attached to the wire a copper tube containing a hermetically sealed glass tube fitted with a chemical liquid upon which the salt acts. When the tube is hauled up the glass is taken out of it, and the extent of the discoloration of the liquid is measured by a graduated boxwood scale, which indicates by marking the extent of the change in the colour of the chemical the exact depth of the sea at the place where the lead is hove.

I do not know whether I am correctly describing this very remarkable invention, nor whether my words are at all successful in giving an idea of the nature of it to the reader. I am writing from memory only. But as I have said, of all the contrasts I found between the old and the new life in the fine steamer in which I was journeying to the Cape of Good Hope as a passenger nothing impressed me more forcibly than the exact measurement of the depth of the sea, snatched with mathematical accuracy from a surface over which we were being driven at a velocity of between thirteen and fourteen knots an hour. The mariner, indeed, owes a large debt of gratitude to Sir William Thomson. His inventions are marvellously fine, and of incalculable value to the seaman.

And yet such amazing departures as this deep-sea lead

from the old beaten track do but furnish a wonderful testimony to the nautical judgment and shrewd perception of our grandsires, since they compel us to observe, by forcing our gaze backwards, so to speak, that most of the essentials of the fabric and furniture of a sailing ship we in this age of advanced science do yet repeat without having improved upon the examples our forefathers furnished us with. An old sailor stepping on board a vessel fitted with what may be called the most "improved appliances," might find indeed some changes that would bewilder him, yet not so many but that a glance aloft and a turn or two about the decks would make him speedily feel at home. The running gear still leads very much after the old fashion. Dead-eyes may be wanting, and there may be an arrangement of screws where laniards formerly did the work; but the shear-poles are still in their places, and the ratlines are fitted to the shrouds as though the rigging had been rattled down by Anson's men or the hearties of Nelson's time. The cathead is gone, and there is a crane or davit to take the place of that ponderous projection of timber, with its big sheave-holes and massive gear. The bowsprit and jib-booms are in one, and are of iron. The windlass is revolved by steam, the donkey-engine snorts as the winch swings the cargo out of the hold; tacks and sheets are metal ropes; the masts are no longer fidded, but slide into one another like the tubes of a telescope; there are double yards as high as the topgallant mast; boats lie keel up on skids, instead of being griped and hanging over the side from the davits. Yet the wisdom of our ancestors is still in our ships; there is less beam, indeed; the dimensions of some craft would make many an old pig-tail stand straight out like a pump-handle with consternation at proportions so antagonistic to the

comfortable theories of length four times the breadth. But substantially the changes are very much fewer than people would suppose, speaking, that is, of the sailing ship.

Marine conservatism that is due, perhaps, not so much to blind adherence to the past as to the perception that the skill, cunning, and experiences of our forefathers left us, on the whole, not very much to improve upon, is curiously illustrated by two of the three famous L's. The "three L's" are Lead, Latitude, and Look-out; they might more worthily stand for Log, Lead, and Lights; or, since the look-out is essential, let the log be dropped for good eyes; but give us the lights, anyhow. The log and lead are the illustrations I mean. The lump of lead attached to a line, and dropped over the side to ascertain how far off the bottom of the sea is; the clattering reel-log, with its immense scope of line, knots, bag or chip, or "log ship," as it is sometimes called, and its sand-glass—how long have these primitive contrivances been in use? I have somewhere read that the reel-log is as old as the fifteenth century; and the hand-lead, we may presume, is coeval with the first sailor, black or white or yellow, that ever felt himself under the necessity to discover whether the water shoaled under his little ship as she sailed along. For how better should a man find the depth of water than by attaching a weight to the end of a line, dropping it over the side, and then measuring the extent of line the weight carried with it? This is the theory of the hand-lead; and of the deep-sea lead too. It is not so old as Adam, simply because Adam never went to sea, but it is quite likely to be as old as Noah. It has come straight down through our naval story of all times; and in this truly wonderful age of scientific achievements it may fairly be considered

as held by the mariner to be still one of the most trustworthy implements in the machinery devised by human skill for the navigation of ships. In a well-known work on navigation the writer says: "In tracing the various improvements which have been made from time to time in the nautical profession, it is not a little strange that the lead line has been permitted to remain thus long *in statu quo*, with the same rude marks which it probably had in the offset of its use. Yet such is the fact, notwithstanding the numberless abilities of professional writers who have one by one handed down, with the care of a Scriptural translation, these relics of primitive seamanship." This was written in the days when Darcy Lever, Glascock, Murphy, Jeffers, and the like, were nautical authorities. Since then there have been innumerable contrivances for taking soundings by automatic arrangements. Some of them are excellent. The failures, on the other hand, have been very numerous. One is stated by the writer I have just quoted as consisting of an instrument which contained a small glass tube that had a hole at the lower extremity, protected by a spring which permitted a proportionable quantity of water to rise in the tube. The idea was ingenious, but the spring proved untrustworthy, and the mariner, in a hurry to get home, bothered to death by registrations which he knew to be false, his maintopsail aback and all hands grumbling, rushed precipitately to first principles, and with a sigh of deep relief heard the hoarse cry rising from the side of "By the deep, nine!"

The great secret of all successful marine invention or improvement is simplicity, and herein lies one of the distinctive merits of Sir William Thomson's sounding machine. Any man who could make one rope do the work of two was an inventor to be blessed by sailors.

The designer of a block whose sheave travelled easily, instead of jamming upon its pin as in olden times, would be justly esteemed a marine benefactor. Jack perfectly well knows that a ship is in reality as complex to his hands as she looks to be, with her cobweb of rigging, to the landsman's eye. To win his confidence in your talent you must give him something speedy in its operations, and sure in its results; for everything at sea must be done quickly, and, whatever the issue, it must correspond as accurately with what is required as human judgment can contrive it. The old hand or deep-sea lead, and the old reel-log, in both which contrivances you may find the simple wisdom of our nautical progenitors, are like the Jacks of an ancient date, rough, but ready and reliable. The sailor finds comfort in their primitiveness, and although he may carry patents of wonderful ingenuity and fidelity with him, he will never, or at all events he ought never to, be found without those humble instruments with which our forefathers measured and sounded their way through thickness and through darkness over unfurrowed surfaces. The lead and lines may be briefly described. One is called the hand-lead, the other the deep-sea (pronounced "dipsey") lead. The hand-lead weighs from 7lb. to 14lb., and is attached to a line from twenty to twenty-five fathoms long. This line has indications at intervals of a fathom called "marks" and "deeps." Those fathoms which are indicated, as with a piece of leather, a piece of red, or white, or blue bunting, and so forth, are called "marks;" the unindicated fathoms are termed "deeps." Hence the leadsman, after swinging the lead forward and touching bottom with it, delivers the depth by calling out "By the mark five," "By the deep eight," according as the indication is with the marks or the deeps. If the depth

is a little more than the indication, or than the "deep" which he has to judge, he cries, "And a quarter eight," or whatever the figure may be. If less, then "A quarter less eight," as it may happen.

On the other hand, the deep-sea lead-line may range to two hundred fathoms long, and the lead attached to it weigh as much as thirty pounds. At the bottom of this lead grease, or tallow, or soap may be placed in a hollow formed to receive some sticky substance of the kind. This is called the "arming," and to it will adhere fragments denoting the character of the bottom, so that a navigator by looking at this "arming" after the lead has been drawn up will often know where he is as accurately as if the coast was in clear view. The old custom of marking the deep-sea line is still adhered to. A variation was attempted many years ago, and the line was marked in such a way that no two marks were the same. Old sailors will know if this method was ever adopted. As it is the marks need experience and memory to call out. Three, five, and seven fathoms are marked the same as thirteen, fifteen, and seventeen. The manner of heaving the hand-lead is full of marine colour, and furnishes a singularly picturesque item to the general appearance of the sailing ship. A man stands in the chains leaning in a breast rope or band. In one hand he holds the coil of line, in the other the lead, which he heaves forward with fine sympathetic touch, instantly feeling the contact, and delivering in a wild song-like note the depth of water he finds. Perhaps for the completeness of such a scene you require thickish weather, the vessel close-hauled under easy sail, breaking the water sluggishly from her bows, captain and officers on the poop or quarter-deck eagerly listening to the raven-like cry that rises from under the side, sending at the

same time penetrating glances to right and left. For here they are in soundings that have shoaled to twelve or fourteen fathoms. They guess, perhaps with perfect accuracy, the ship's whereabouts, but they dare not reckon themselves sure, and so, with extreme caution, they grope their way along foot by foot, praying for the thickness to settle away that some blessed pilot-boat may heave in sight and dismiss them below for dry togs with restful minds.

The heaving of the deep-sea lead is a more laborious and complicated matter. The vessel's way is deadened; one man stands in the bows with the lead, and others are ranged along the side. Each man holds a coil of the line in his hand. When all is ready the order is given to "Heave!" The man who holds the lead drops it, singing out "Watch there! watch," as an intimation to the next man to look out. The cry is repeated by one man after another as the "fakes" fall from his hand. When the lead strikes bottom, the officer marks the indication; the line is then whipped into a snatch-block, and hauled in by the men and coiled away ready for immediate use. There is always a degree of excitement in this heaving of the deep-sea lead. You get a cast in coming into soundings, and lively is the general joy amongst a ship's company who have been many months away from home, when the hoarse, peculiar cry of "Watch ho! watch!" terminates in the lead striking English ground.

It is a strange intimation of home being at hand, this bringing up of sand or shells from a depth of six or eight hundred feet upon the arming of the lead. In truth Jack's method of finding out where he is, not by the eyes or the nose, but by dropping a weight overboard is entirely his own, and under no other conditions of life is

there demanded this marine practice of feeling for home, or for his situation, by holding the end of a line as the spider lives along its thread and has touch of the whole machinery by a forefinger laid upon one silken length.

There was a talk some time ago of the invention of a compass designed to act electrically upon the rudder, so that a course being set a ship would steer it herself and keep her head true. I fancy that a man need not know much about the sea to feel that if marine inventors are going to exercise their genius in such directions as this the sooner they turn their attention to the land, and the requirements of people living on shore, the better it will be for persons who, when they embark on a voyage, do so with a desire to reach their destination in safety. It seems to me that the utmost caution should be exercised in the adoption of contrivances at sea whose tendency is to lighten the demands upon the seaman's judgment and experience, and induce a habit of carelessness by accustoming him to repose faith in inventions which as man's handiwork ought under no circumstances to be implicitly confided in. It is evident, at all events, that the sailor sees this pretty clearly, for, as I have already pointed out, though you give him twenty patent sounding machines, and twenty patent self-registering logs to carry to sea with him, he will take good care not to sail away without the old reel and the old lead.

The reel-log is the ancient instrument for determining the actual speed of a ship at the moment of passing through the water, by measuring the distance she runs in a given time. That time is usually twenty-eight seconds,* and this is measured by sand in a glass. It is a plain rule of three sum. You say, if a ship will sail or steam over 6080 feet, or one nautical mile, in one

* Very often fourteen seconds.

hour, how many feet will she pass over in twenty-eight seconds. The answer being found, you measure the line off to it, passing a piece of stuff through the strands with one knot tied in it for the first measurement, another piece of stuff with two knots tied in it for the second measurement, and so on for as many knots as may be deemed necessary. At the end of the line there is sometimes attached a cone-shaped bag of canvas, sometimes a piece of semi-circular wood; a peg is fitted in that the bag or wood may fall square and hold water. This is then thrown overboard; a certain amount of line called stray is tossed over, so that the bag or piece of wood may veer clear of the wake. Then, when the mark indicating where the first knot is measured from on the line comes to the officer's hand, he cries to the man who holds the sand-glass "Turn!" and continues to help the line off the reel whilst the sand runs. The instant the glass is out the man who holds it cries "Stop!" The officer checks the line, ascertains the speed by looking at the nearest mark, and the line is then reeled up, the peg being dragged out of the bag or piece of wood by a jerk, which enables the men to haul the line in with comparative ease.*

No one will question the unwieldiness of this process. Under any circumstances heaving the log demands three persons, but there are times when the ship is sailing fast, and when in consequence a great deal of line goes overboard, when it is as much as three or four men can do to drag the thin, cutting, slippery log line in, while a fourth or fifth, pressing the log-reel against the rail, winds the stuff up. Yet, clumsy as it is, with all the ponderosity and heavy-handedness of the ideas of the

* This log is regularly hove on board many steamers and nearly all, if, indeed, not all sailing vessels.

antique sea-dog in it, it is by the majority of sailors relied upon still as no patent is. The rotating logs are excellent. They tell you how far you have run in a given time, and there are patent deck logs which will tell you how fast you are actually passing through the water, by your calculating the movement of the index hand by your watch. Nevertheless, with the rotating log towing in the water on the port quarter, and a deck-log dragging a fin after it on the starboard quarter, Jack still heaves the old-fashioned log of his grandsires, still clings to it, still understands that there is nothing automatic which can possibly provide the same security furnished by those first simple principles the application of which must be by the mariner himself.

The sea is heaving like quicksilver to the sun, whilst here and there, from either bow or on either beam, a solitary flying fish breaks from the gleaming surface, and trembles along its short and aimless flight, striking the brow of a light swell, and vanishing in the silken side of it, like a shaft of mother-of-pearl glowing with prismatic hues, when I come on deck and find fair on the port bow the towering island of Teneriffe, with Gomera looming to starboard, massive in its sand-like tints and its shades of slate and green and grey. It was not my first sight of the famous peak by many; yet I found a fascination as of perfect novelty in that noble Heaven-searching altitude of volcanic rock. The dim browns and greens of the island rose faint and fainter yet to the masses of vapour—some coloured by the forbidding darkness of the electric storm, some radiant as steam to the white shining of the early sun—which boiled about the summits and obscured the mighty topmost eminence. Under those clouds which lay blackest the white waters of the sea breaking at the base in high

and savage leapings of foam were as spectral as froth seen at night time. At moments the peak emerged, distinguishable from the fleecy clouds which were wreathed about the summits, by the fairy-like solidity of its outline, which, being snow-clad, glanced like a cone of frosted silver. It came and went; but every time it came there was a murmur from the many groups watching it, with a cry or two of admiration and an eager pointing to it.

You needed some lofty man-of-war close in to the island to measure to the admiration the wonder of that sublime pinnacle. A painter will put a human figure into his picture to illustrate dimensions; and to the passing spectator of Teneriffe nothing I think would so fitly mark the magnitude of this noble cloud-crowned ocean rock, as some great ship of war at anchor close in; a vessel whose trucks from her decks would seem to brush the stars as she rolled. The island vivifies in tint as we bring it abeam. It may be eight or ten miles off; yet so brilliant is the breaking of the foam against the long natural terrace to the left, that you seem to catch faintly the thunder of those weltering masses of water, just as you fancy that you hear stealing up, gusty and moaning against the breeze, the mutterings of a thunderstorm, without wind, in the sullen sootish vapour gathered black in the great hollow above which the clouds rise whiter and whiter, till they melt and leave in clear and sun-touched configuration the famous and sublime peak standing out with tender, moon-like radiance against the morning azure above and beyond.*

* "The pike of Teneriff—how high is it?" asks old Robert Burton, in his "Digression of Ayre"; "79 miles high, or 52, as Patricius holds, or 9, as Snellius demonstrates in his 'Eratosthenes'?" We moderns do not seem much more resolved on this matter; for I have seen the

The coast of Africa was tolerably close aboard, Cape Corbeiro bearing about eighteen miles distant, when there happened a little incident whose interest lay purely and simply in its suggestiveness. The water was a dead level of brilliant calm, and our steamer at noon headed straight down the burning wake of the sun that streamed from the horizon to her stem like a path formed of new tin, fiery with white and scorching needle-like points of light. On either hand of this wake you saw the ocean broken in hues by long serpentine lines of current, pale as starlight in its contrast with the ocean tints, which seemed to rise like liquid dyes out of the depths in folds of colour to the shining surface. Here and there were oleaginous patches, whale-spawn probably, with a little flock or two of Mother Carey's chickens floating in the thick of them. The flying fish whisked out dark to the sun on wings of silver gossamer, and on the quarter was the black wet fin of a shark.

Suddenly a sail was made out on the port bow, and before long we had it close enough to discover that it was a schooner riding to her anchor with her mainsail hoisted. As we approached we observed a boat crowded with men obviously making for us by heading, as it were, to cross our hawse, and pulling as hard as they could drag upon their oars. Curiosity was excited. What could they want? Were they short of water? That seemed improbable, with the land within a comparatively easy pull. Yet one could not forget that that land was Africa, whose arid soil and burning sands rolled for leagues down to the sea, waterless. Who could tell, besides, for how many days the calm we were

altitude of the Peak variously stated at figures ranging from 8300 to 12,200 feet. The ascent from Oratawa, at the base, is within twelve miles.

steaming through had reigned in this place? 'Twas difficult to realize stagnation on the deck of a flying steamer; but then I, with experiences slender when compared with those of others, could recollect a spell of three weeks near to the Line of absolute calm; with never more in all that time than a mocking breath of cats-paw frosting the horizon and dying out long before it had neared the ship.

The fellows rowed vigorously; there was too much energy indeed in the flourishing of their shining blades to suggest enfeeblement and physical distress; though to be sure despair will give a hand of iron to the limb of a dying man. Conjecture, however, was soon set at rest by a black-faced fellow crowned with a red nightcap standing up in the bows and waving with Spanish contortions an immense fish that looked like a huge Dogger Bank cod. The schooner was a Spanish fisherman, and that boat-load of men on sighting the steamer had shoved off and rowed for a long half hour with all their might under a burning sun in the hope of selling a basket of fish to us! What notions had they, I wonder, of the obligations of the mail room, and of sea captains' consuming love of dispatch? Did they suppose that my friend Travers was going to stop his engines for the sake of a meal of boiled and fried fish? Yet the sight was a picturesque one, and mightily suggestive. The schooner was a fine craft of possibly a hundred tons. Her topmasts were on deck, but her lower masts had a good rake. Her bows rose in a long, dominating, defiant sheer, and her lines went aft in a low, sneaking, piratical length of side that brought her stern well down. The people in her boat made you think of the Spanish Main and the old black flag. They looked as complete a set of ruffians as any writer of boys' stories could desire to

depicture; yet I dare say they were all perfectly honest men. The mahogany faces, with black beards, gleaming eyes, and a profusion of ringlets falling over their ears, which were weighed down with earrings, were all to a man bent in a savage sort of way upon us, and their attire filled the sight with a score of colours. There was a large ship's company in that boat; yet, as if to mark their numbers, when we were abreast of the schooner, a second boat, loaded with just such another set of beauties shoved off from her, possibly to fish with lines. Now, thought I to myself, as I leaned over the rail watching the schooner and her boats, by turning back the world's history through a chapter or two one might find a fine significance in such a spectacle as this. Steam has done for the ocean what the locomotive has done for the highway, and the marine Dick Turpin long ago took his last Harrison-Ainsworth-like gallop. But I confess that the meaning of the old chronicles came upon me with a violent sense of reality whilst I stood looking at that schooner with her picaroonish sheer and rake, and at those boats filled with men whose attire and features made them perfectly resemble bloodthirsty rogues. Figure that vessel out there a corsair, and our ship a rich Indiaman which the faint airs of the night had languidly driven into this sphere of stagnation, and within sight of the beauty yonder. Of course the schooner would have a terrible Long Tom snug on the forecastle. Twelve or twenty-four pounders would peep, tompian-out, from her ports, and her bulwarks would be garnished by brass pieces. Cutlasses, hangers, muskets and pistols with immensely long barrels would complete the sinister apparel of the boatloads of desperadoes heading to board the Indiaman fore and aft. Imagine the flutter amongst the ladies under the white awnings

of the stately ship that lies as dead upon the sea as did the vessel in Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner!" Think of the hurried preparations to receive the scoundrels, who must certainly have their throats cut if the crew and passengers of the Indiaman are to escape the plank or the poignard! The carronades are loaded, Jack strips himself to his trousers, small arms are liberally handed around, the ladies are sent below, and the battle begins!

But long before the imagination has brought the excitement to this point, our whirling propeller has swept the schooner far down upon the quarter, and the red-capped crowd in the boat, that is now a mere speck on the verge of our fan-shaped wake, are doggedly making their way back to their little vessel.

It is, indeed, a calm of the kind we are speeding through that establishes more strongly than any other differences that can be noted the contrast between the ocean passenger steamship and the sailing vessel. Ships are not likely to be found where we are, whether homeward or outward bound. They are very many leagues further to the westwards. Yet to compensate one for the destruction of the marine idealism which the sailing vessel inspires and perpetuates—for that sense of destruction, I mean, one gets whilst thinking of the beauty of a full-rigged ship when one is on board a steamer, driving through it with naked masts—it would have furnished a satisfactory incident to have met and passed a sailing vessel in this profound calm. The picture is indeed easily constructed. Conceive her with her painted ports reflected in the burnished water that brims like oil to her black hot sides. When she first comes into sight her canvas shows like a rising star against the blue; but she grows with marvellous rapidity to our speed of

fourteen knots, and as if by magic she stands up before us fair on the bow, a full-rigged ship, with her head slewed round in the breathless atmosphere, to any point of the compass you like to name, her courses hauled up, her spanker in, all staysails down, and her vane a dead red rag at the main-royal-mast-head—

> "By her tall and triple masts we know
> Some noble voyager that has to woo
> The trade winds, and to stem the 'ecliptic' surge,
> The coral groves, the shores of conch and pearl,
> Where she will cast her anchor and reflect
> Her cabin lights on warmer waves
> And under planets brighter than our own."

Her mate stands near the main-rigging with moistened finger lifted to catch the direction of a draught of air that breathes only in his hope. The skipper right aft watches our thunderous passage with folded arms. Passengers in a group at the side fix a languishing gaze upon us as we go roaring by, with the plumes in our ladies' hats blowing, their dresses rippling, the awning shaking to the strong refreshing wind raised by our noble progress. Jack, perched on some yardarm, or at work on the flying jibboom, or hanging on somewhere aloft by his eyelids, as his custom is, drops whatever job he may be upon for a moment to stare at the great iron palace that is rushing by in a boiling cauldron of her own making, and after a thoughtful mastication of his quid expectorates in a dubious manner as if he could not make up his mind, and then resumes his work.

But such contrasts of ocean life must be mainly left to fancy in a voyage to the Cape. Happy it is said is the nation that has no history, and happy is the marine journey that is uneventful. Barrenness is the rule nowadays, in steamers at all events; and since the hour

when we put Madeira over our stern we have encountered nothing but blue and brilliant skies, sleeping seas, an island or two of grand and impressive beauty, and airs and breezes so pure, so exhilarating, so vitalizing, that life to her innermost sources feels the subtle influence, and confesses the magic with merry laughter, with bright eyes, and a keen delight in the mere circumstance of existence.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BARQUE "PERTHSHIRE."

SEATED aft one day in the twilight of the awning, in company with a passenger who had passed some years of his boyhood at sea, I fell to talking with him about the surprises of the ocean, the wizard-like power of the deep of transforming the most prosaic of its interests into circumstances filled with the astonishments of tragedy, with wonders of human endurance, with the moving poetry of noble pathetic romance. My companion said he could give me an illustration of the surprises of the deep, and without further ado, started thus:—

"A few days before embarking in this vessel I spent an evening with a nautical friend—a very entertaining little man, in no sense a sea-dog. In appearance, and perhaps in dress, he might pass as a clerk who has grown elderly in the service of a bank. There is little in him of the bronzed salt who, as Dana says, habited in flowing breeches and tarpaulin hat, swings his dark and toughened hands athwartships as he rolls along his

walk, with the fingers curled as though they yet grasped a rope. However, it is not necessary to be long in my friend's company to discover that he has been a sailor. In truth, he used the sea for too many years not to exhibit in forms more or less subtle many of those characteristics by which sailors, and more especially seamen of the old school, are distinguished, such as a grave plainness of manner, a frank, self-unconscious openness of gaze, a certain heartiness and earnestness of speech, the more marked perhaps for a lively relish of small and artless humour. His story was this, and I will tell it in his own language as closely as my memory permits.

"'In the year 1854—a memorable year for the British merchant sailor, as you may know by looking at the date of that voluminous Act of Parliament which concerns us—I had command of a clipper ship, named the *Desdemona*. We were bound for Calcutta with a general cargo, and the incident I am about to relate happened in the Indian Ocean. We had accommodation for six passengers, but only shipped two, one being an old yellow-faced planter, the biggest grumbler who ever stepped on board a vessel, a surly, long-faced swab, with gaunt cheek-bones standing up under his eyes, and the eyes themselves sunk so deep that it was wonderful he was able to see anything with them except the objects that stood plump in front of him. He had found a cheap berth in our ship, cheap, that is, in comparison with the cost of a passage to India in those days in one of the regular liners. Yet he expected as much as if ours had been a Company's ship, full of cooks, and bakers, and stewards, and aswarm with live stock. The other passenger was a young man named Simmonds, a pleasant fellow, full of amusing stories, willing to lend a hand

anywhere, and to make the best of whatever happened. Mr. Simmonds had been at sea for a short time, and then knocked off, and tried his hand at something ashore, which failing, he succeeded in obtaining some post out in India—what it was I cannot remember after all these years, nor does it matter. An uncle of his had commanded a fine Indiaman, and had been lost in her. He also told me that a brother of his was chief mate of a vessel named the *Perthshire;* a little barque, he said she was, hailing from some Scotch port, and at that time making the passage to Rangoon, as he believed, she having left the Clyde two weeks or so before the *Desdemona* sailed. Thus, to an extent, his sympathies were with the sea, and this helped me and my officers, I have no doubt, to find him the jolly good fellow we thought him.

"'There was no fault to be found with my little vessel. I had had charge of ships before, but this was my first experience of the *Desdemona*. She had more beam than a sailor of a later day than mine would dream of associating with the word clipper, yet the stability that her breadth between bulwarks gave her, furnished her with heels that a slimmer ship could only have rivalled under certain conditions of weather. I have been carrying a mainroyal when on a bow line, and passed vessels half as big again, bowed down to their covering boards by a maintop-gallantsail and single-reefed topsail. We had the old-fashioned channels, but though she was pretty deep, 'twas rare for the old *Desdemona* to drag them. With her painted ports, black and somewhat heavy tops, and short royal mast heads, she had the look of one of the old-fashioned corvettes, and I remember two vessels in one week "dipping" to us under some confused impression, I suppose, that we were a man-of-war, though I don't know, I am sure, in what part of us aloft they

could have searched for the coachwhip. The crew seemed a tidy body of men, all of them Europeans, and most of them Englishmen. They did their work with the average smartness you get out of merchant seamen who have never been taught to skip. And so, sir, we sailed along until we entered the Indian Ocean, and arrived at that part of it where the extraordinary circumstance I am about to relate to you happened.

"'There had been a fresh breeze blowing all night, but it failed before daybreak, and when the sun rose there was scarcely enough of it to keep the light sails full. It was a brilliant, splendid morning, the sun coming up into a cloudless sky, and the sea drew to the ship out from the southward in a soft heaving, with nothing but flashing glory over the starboard cathead, and the horizon running out of it into the westwards in a circle that was like crystal against the blue there. The watch were washing down when I came on deck. There was a fellow going aloft forward on some job the mate had set him to. I took a look around, but saw nothing. Presently the man who was up in the fore-topmast crosstrees, or higher, hailed the deck and reported a white object in sight two or three points on the lee bow. I crossed the deck to have a look, and seeing nothing, fetched the glass and levelled it in the direction the man had indicated. Nothing appearing in the lens, I handed the telescope to the mate and asked him to mount a few ratlines and see if he could make out what the object was. I watched him working his way and pointing the glass as he went to half the height of the lower shrouds, when he suddenly stopped, and, after taking a prolonged squint, he called to me that the object was a ship's boat apparently, but whether with occupants or not he couldn't tell. I told the man at the

wheel to keep the ship away, and Mr. Simmonds then coming on deck, I joined him in a walk, and this went on till breakfast time, at which hour the boat, if it was a boat, was sheer on the horizon, just visible from the deck. The man who had sighted her must have had wonderful eyes, but no doubt it was the boat's sail shining in the sun that had caught his sight; yet when I looked at her through the glass before going below to breakfast the sail had been lowered, whereupon I gathered that there must be living beings in her, and I presumed, of course, by her dropping her sail, that she meant to wait for us to pick her up.

"'When I came on deck I found that the boat was almost right over the bows. I looked at the compass, and observed that the ship had been brought very nearly to her course again.

"'"I don't quite make out that boat's manœuvrings," said the second mate to me; "I've been watching her whilst you were below, sir, and the whole while the people in her have been rowing with a steady stroke dead to wind'ard."

"'I picked up the glass, and found it to be as the second mate had said. The boat in the lens was clear enough, and the regular flashing and fading of sparks of light against her side showed the movement of oars. I could not imagine why she should want to get to windward of us, seeing that by her remaining where we had first sighted her she would be very easily picked up. They kept crawling steadily into the wind, and I, bent on finding out what her meaning might be, luffed the ship till the yards were braced sharp up. This found her again dead ahead. She was then about a mile and a half distant. The men in her were distinctly visible now. I counted eight. They mustered five oars, and

kept them going. A sixth man steered, a seventh crouched in the bows, and the eighth stood up against the mast watching us under the sharp of his hand. The draught was so light, and their boat sneaked along so nimbly, that to fetch her we should have needed to go about, perhaps only to lose her after several boards; but shortly after five bells in the morning watch the wind puffed up about east-south-east, which enabled us to haul in upon the weather braces, and head dead for the boat. I watched her narrowly, and observed that so soon as the wind shifted, and they saw that we were heading for them, they threw in their oars and waited for us to come. We drove slowly along, and were presently close to them.

"'She was a ship's boat, apparently a long-boat. I brought the ship to the wind when she was within hail, and sung out to know what they were doing adrift there, and if they wanted us to receive them aboard. The fellow I had noticed standing up against the mast watching us under his hand seemed to be in charge, and at all events was spokesman. He was a young man of about thirty, with a burnt face, but fair, dressed in good clothes, and on the whole a comely, well-looking young fellow. The others had the appearance, most of them at all events, of being foreigners. They were swarthy and black-bearded, dressed in the wild clothes of the merchantman's forecastle, one or two of them with earrings, all of them with knives in their belts. The boat seemed deeper than the mere weight of the men should have made her, but it was impossible to see what she was stocked with.

"'On my hailing her, as I have told you, the man who stood up replied that they wanted no assistance. "We belonged to a vessel named the *Eagle*," he cried out; "a

little brig that foundered two days ago, through a started butt, or something of that kind. The master and three men stayed aboard, meaning to leave her in another boat. I was her chief mate, and we're now bound for Madagascar. This boat's a tighter vessel than the brig, and we feel perfectly safe in her after the sort of timbers we've been used to between us and the bottom."

"'At this several of his companions laughed aloud. I looked at them suspiciously, but it was not for me to meddle. If they refused help that was their business, though I never doubted for a moment that their refusal was based on some motive which, if it could be got at, might be found to hold a very desperate meaning. As they declined assistance I contented myself with a wave of the hand to them; but, when we filled on the ship, I took another long look at them through the glass, and then handed it to Mr. Simmonds, asking him if he could see anything resembling a ship's name painted upon the boat. Like myself he saw nothing, but as he put down the glass he said to me that some of them looked an ugly set of ruffians, and that he shouldn't be surprised if behind their being adrift and declining assistance there lay a foul and terrible secret.

"'When I filled on the vessel they hoisted their lug. If they were heading for Madagascar they seemed to know how to steer for it. The boat's course was about north-west by north. I took note of that at the time, and found her still so heading when, after a little, she was only just visible through the glass.

"'We talked a good deal about her and her people during the day, and the yellow-faced, grumbling planter insisted that it was my duty to have boarded her, or have brought her men aboard and questioned them.

"'"Yes," I said, "that would unquestionably have been my duty had the *Desdemona* been a man-of-war; but, as we were only a small sailing ship, the utmost I could be expected to do was to offer assistance, and proceed on my voyage if help was declined."

"'The breeze freshened before noon, and when I made eight bells our speed was about five knots, the water smooth, and the ship under starboard stunsails. It was somewhere near three o'clock when a sail was sighted dead ahead. As she drew plainer into sight it was noticed that she lay hove-to. I looked for a colour, but could see nothing of the kind. It was reasonable, of course, to infer, by her having her maintopsail aback in such weather as this, that she was in trouble, and having sighted us coming along had hove-to to speak us. She was a little barque, and closer inspection discovered an air of confusion aloft. Her mainsail was hauled up, the foretopsail yard on the cap, whilst the top-gallant yard remained hoisted. The outer jib halliards had been let go, and the sail had run half way down the stay and there stuck. Other features, that I need not trouble you by describing, made her look terribly adrift, and the suspicion that there was something more than wrong with her was confirmed by the appearance of her hull, that was much deeper in the water, with a cock-up of the bows forward, than it was conceivable her cargo would have brought her. Many wonderful things happen at sea, and I had seen too much in that way myself to conclude right away that the men we had encountered in the morning belonged to that sinking barque. But, I say, it looked uncommonly like as if that were the case.

"'I turned to the mate and Mr. Simmonds, and said to them, "It seems to me as if we'd tumbled upon those

fellows' secret. If that yonder isn't a case of scuttling, I'm an Egyptian."

"'We approached the barque, all hands staring at her with all their eyes, and once again I brought the *Desdemona* to the wind. The vessel was derelict. I hailed her several times, but got no answer from her. We had approached in such a manner that her counter was hidden from us. There were few or no nameboards in those days. But when we rounded-to we got a stern view of her, and then it was that Mr. Simmonds, grasping my arm, exclaimed in a low voice, "Good God, captain, observe her name!"

"'I looked and read the word *Perthshire*, coming out in staring white letters plain enough with every lift of her stern. For a moment or two I couldn't understand the agitation in him until it flashed upon me, and I cried out, "*Perthshire!* why that was your brother's vessel, wasn't it?"

"'He said, speaking with great excitement, "Yes; and she was a little barque, just such another as that. There's no doubt of her. She's the *Perthshire* that Harry sailed in. Why, if that boat's crew we met this morning belonged to her, a lie was told right off by that sandy fellow calling himself chief mate. For God's sake, captain, let us board her before she founders!"

"'I was quite willing to do so, and a boat being lowered, he and I rowed over to the derelict. We got aboard, and the first thing we saw was the body of a man with his head beaten in lying in the companion. He had a pistol in his hand, and I took him to be the master of the ship. A black seaman lay dead near the galley. We went into the cabin, and in the first berth we looked into we found a man lying dead with a terrible wound in his throat. He was half clad, and

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what he wore was in rags, and there were other signs which I cannot mention to you of a prolonged and frightful struggle. At the sight of him Mr. Simmonds raised a terrible cry, clapping his hands to his heart and reeling up against me. It was his brother that lay before him; and I think the shock and astonishment of the whole thing, the sights I witnessed, coupled with this marvellous coming across of one brother by another, would have held me rooted to the cabin deck like a petrified man, if it had not been for the sudden gush and wash and yearning sound of water close up against the ceiling, warning enough to my ears, as you may suppose, that the vessel might founder at any instant. So as all delay was out of the question, and as even a child might have known that the man stretched before us was as dead as clay can be, I dragged Mr. Simmonds on deck, the poor fellow weeping bitterly, got him into the boat, and returned to the *Desdemona*.

"'Well, I may as well say here that, half an hour after we had left the *Perthshire*, she went down; but by this time my resolution, fortified by the entreaties of Mr. Simmonds and the execrations of the gaunt-faced planter, was formed, and my ship was heading fair, as I reckoned it to be, for the spot where we hoped to sight and overhaul the long-boat. It might prove a waste of time and delay the voyage; but I was determined to take my chance of that. The sight of those three murdered men, with, perhaps, objects as dreadful to behold in the forecastle, had set my blood boiling. Who could doubt that the boat we had met with in the morning held the mutineers and murderers? Small wonder they desired to give us a wide berth, guessing, as they must have done, that we were pretty well bound to fall in with the abandoned barque if we held on as we then were.

"'I never went to bed all that night, neither did Mr. Simmonds, nor the growling planter, nor my two mates. I knew the course the boat had taken, and was quite sure of overhauling her, for the wind that headed us would head her too, and if it came to ratching it should be in short boards. The breeze freshened towards morning. The weather had been bright and clear all night, and I promise you a sharp look-out had been kept. When the dawn came I sent a man on to the royal-yard with the glass, the same fellow that had sighted the boat the morning before, but he could see nothing. It was blowing a middling fresh wind, just enough to keep our fore and mizzen royals furled, but when the dawn came I shortened sail to the main-top gallantsail, with the mainsail hanging in the buntlines, for it wouldn't do to pass the boat. This went on till ten o'clock, when I saw another man I had sent aloft with the glass working away with it at something dead to windward, and then he yells down in a voice of triumph "Sail ho! The long-boat onmistakably abeam there!" I sprang aloft myself to make sure. The man was perfectly right. The boat's lug sliding in and out of the seas wasn't to be mistaken for anything else. She was going through it close hauled, and I began to fear that if there didn't come a shift of wind the chase would prove a long one, whatever might come of it.

"'I kept a man at the mast-head to hold her in sight, then put the ship about, and kept a half-hour's ratch on the port tack. This brought our canvas within view of her, when we went about again, and they seemed to guess our game as if by instinct, for very soon after we had boarded our foretack the chap aloft sung out that the boat had gone about. Well, what manœuvrings followed you will hardly require me to tell you. 'Twas

tack and tack with us and with the boat, for you see she was so small we dursn't venture upon a long ratch for fear that whilst we were heading away to wind'ard she would put her helm up and run, showing a cloth or two, just enough to keep her going, but not enough for us to see. However, as you may suppose, it was impossible she could have escaped us as a matter of sailing. But the afternoon coming on the breeze freshened, and it drew up a trifle thick, so that we lost sight of her, and as I knew they were smart enough to take advantage of this, and as, moreover, evening was fast approaching, I felt we should do no good by continuing the pursuit; so taking no notice of the planter's denunciations of me for my want of resolution, nor of Mr. Simmonds's looks, which were full of reproaches, I shifted the helm for our proper port, between ourselves feeling not a little relieved when I found the *Desdemona* heading true for Calcutta.

"'For the fact is, during the chase I had had plenty of time for reflection, and for dwelling upon a consideration I had overlooked in the first hurry of my temper and horror; which was: Supposing we came up to the boat, what should we do? It was certain the men were not likely to come aboard of themselves. It would have been murder to have run them down, even if we had been cocksure that they belonged to the barque, and deserved hanging or drowning. We had no guns aboard, nothing that we could have brought to bear upon them, and threatened to sink them with if they didn't step over the side quietly; and even if we had had guns, the law, no doubt, would have held me guilty of murder if I had fired at the boat and drowned the people for refusing to obey my orders. Consequently there would have been nothing for us but to lower one of our own boats, and send a portion of our crew to make prisoners of the

men. Would our crew have consented? I don't reckon they would. Supposing they had been willing, and the others had allowed them to come alongside, there must have been a murderous fight, amid an ugly sea heavy enough to capsize both boats and drown all hands with anything resembling a struggle going on in them. I name only a few of the difficulties I foresaw, mainly to account for the satisfaction with which I squared away for our proper port. The planter refused to take my view, and said he would have been glad to command any boat I had chosen to send against the mutineers, as he called them. Such talk, of course, was cheap when the occasion for testing his bravery was gone. Mr. Simmonds agreed with me when he heard my arguments; but he was dreadfully affected, poor fellow. The shock had been more than his strength was equal to, and he was not only ill for the rest of the voyage, but, as I afterwards heard, continued so for a long time after his arrival in India. I duly reported the circumstance, and hoped to hear of the boat being picked up, but, though I was careful to make inquiries, I never could succeed in learning more of this business; whence I conclude that the people in the boat had perished.'"

CHAPTER VIII.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT SEA.

SEA life has few prettier sights to offer than the celebration of Divine service on board a large passenger steamer. In fine weather service will often be held on deck, and the picture is never so complete as when the deep blue

water heaves to the horizon from either side under the awning, when the captain, bare-headed, takes his stand at the table or capstan covered with the ensign, and when the white deck is thronged with sailors and passengers, reverent in attitude and hearty in voice, offering a hundred varieties of countenance in the shaded atmosphere through which the breeze, raised by the motion of the vessel, hums pleasantly. In the *Tartar*, service was conducted regularly in the saloon. You had not, indeed, the peculiar effects you get from open air; yet when all were gathered together it was a spectacle to impress the most superficial observer, for beams of the morning sun shone through the large open windows, putting a thousand white stars into the silver lamps and flowing to the tranquil heaving of the ship in lines of rippling radiance upon the polished panels and upon everything bright and shining within the sphere of the rays. But these lines of lustre left the shadows in places the darker, and you got many a diverse tint which the sobered effulgence under the awnings on deck would have toned into a uniformity of hue. The ladies' apparel stole out into tender and delicate dyes for the beautification of the different lights and shadows in the saloon: contrasts would also be strongly accentuated, such as the golden light seeming to hang like a nimbus about some pretty girl's fair head with the wrinkled burnt face of an old sailor beyond showing through it, ringlets upon his forehead, a bushy beard standing out like the tail of a bird from his chin, and the traditional sourness of the elderly salt in the twist at the extremities of his mouth. The dress of the captain and his mates adds its glitter to this scene of shadow and shine, of many coloured dresses, of trembling feathers and twinkling jewellery.

I have no great respect for so-called merchantmen's uniforms. There is really no uniform outside that worn in her Majesty's service; the rest is livery, and I am always sorry to see a shipmaster and his mates figged out in as much gold and buttons as need go to the glorification of a beadle. The companies insist upon their officers habiting themselves in lace and twopenny finery about their wrists, waistcoats, and caps, and all that a prejudiced man like myself can do is to accept the effect as pleasing to ladies, and to hope that Royal Naval men do not for a moment suppose that merchantmen masquerade in this garb of their own will and out of love for imitated feathers.*

Captain Travers, with an edging of gilt to what a tailor would call his vest, in white trousers, rings round his sleeves, many buttons upon his coat, and by his side a cap with a peak richly decorated with lace, very handsomely filled the head of one of the many tables which ran the length of the saloon on both sides. Around him

* It would be interesting to learn when merchantmen were first put into uniform. Possibly the example was originally set by the East India Company. The "uniform" of a captain in that Company consisted (full dress) of a blue coat, black velvet lappels, cuffs and collar, with a bright gold embroidery, "as little expensive as may be:" waistcoat and breeches of deep buff; the buttons were of yellow gilt metal, with the Company's crest; cocked hats, side-arms "to be worn under the coat," and black stocks or neckcloths. The undress was formed of a blue coat with lappels, black collar and cuffs, waistcoat and breeches deep buff, and gilt buttons. But fashions change. This was probably the dress in the close of the last and the beginning of the present century. There may have been other costumes for earlier times. There is good reason, however, for supposing that, prior to 1748, there was no uniform dress worn at sea, either in the State or the Mercantile Service. In that year an advertisement was published ordering all sea-officers in the king's service, from the admiral to the midshipman, to wear a uniformity of clothing, and pattern costumes were lodged at the Navy Office for inspection.

would be grouped his officers, four gentlemen in all, along with the ship's doctor, whose costume, apparently, identical with that of the mates, had its marine suggestions slightly qualified by the pair of spectacles through which the attentive medico gazed down upon the Prayer-book. Engineers, sailors, and firemen, the engineers in buttons, the others in flowing white trousers and blue shirts, made out a large portion of the scene that was completed by the passengers, first, second, and third.

The first Sunday we were out there was some difficulty in procuring music for the hymns. We had, indeed, two pianos and a harmonium; so, as you will perceive, there was no lack of machinery for making a noise. But the captain was unable to find for some time anybody who could play these instruments, and he came to me with a concerned face and said he didn't know what he should do. It was the first time during his command of the vessel that the sailors would be obliged to sing without an accompaniment to help them along, and he feared that they wouldn't like it, and that there would be a breakdown. However, at the last moment a young minister, who was making the voyage for the recovery of his voice, said he would see what he could do, and sat down to the harmonium and played over some hymn tunes to the satisfaction of an anxious crowd which had collected around him. A dark cloud slowly drawing off the moon was but a feeble image of the clearness of Captain Travers's face. It was evident that Jack would not have taken kindly to a hymn had there been no music to encourage him. The ship's company seemed to appreciate the anxieties which had harassed the soul of their commander, for I never heard men sing so loudly and so heartily before. I must confess to an act

of irreverence, too slight, I trust, not to be readily pardoned; I mean the half-smothered laugh that escaped me when the crew, arriving at the word "Holy," sang it "'Oly" at the top of their pipes with a sort of triumphant emphasis that was like saying, "You'll find no *h*'s in *this* hooker, my lad!"

But for all this the services were very impressive. Let me detract nothing from the captain's elocutionary powers, nor from the doctor's high tenor notes, nor from the head steward's fine ejaculatory capacity. Captain Travers read clearly and solemnly, and with the reverence you expect from a man who undertakes to deliver a sacred and heart-lifting message to his fellows. But that was not quite all; it was the thought of the great ocean stretching around; it was the voice of many waters, the rushing and seething sounds rising through the open windows and mingling their mysterious articulation with the notes of the singers or with the solitary voice of the commander; it was the sense of the infinite depth beneath the ploughing share of our keel; it was the fancy of the littleness of the sound our united voices raised in the midst of that great solitude: these and a hundred other such considerations would enter into the service and communicate a character to it that made it a very different thing from the church celebration as we have it ashore. Always under-running the singing, trembling through the reader's accents, pulsing hard in any interval of silence, was the throbbing of the engines. It was like the fevered, bounding heart of the great ship. Whatever you touched seemed as an artery for it. Far as the saloon was removed from the engine-room, you could not put your hand upon the back of a chair, you could not let it rest upon a table, you could not lean your head against the side, you could not feel with

your foot upon the deck but that the trembling of the restless iron heart in the depths beneath was sensible to you, and the ship appeared full of life-blood that coursed through everything you touched or pressed against.

One Sunday morning, not feeling very well, I sat in the captain's cabin on deck during service. At times I could hear the singing floating up through the open skylights; the ship was pitching somewhat heavily, yet the voices of the people below rose above the storming and washing sounds of water flung in acres of dazzling white from the vessel's bows; a canary in the captain's cabin hearing the voices sang too; the engines occasionally raced, and the rattle of the masses of metal swept a vibration through the ship as though the hand of some mighty giant were upon her shaking her; the hissing noises caused by the hydraulic steering gear stole through the various sounds like the stealthy utterances of some immense snake. The mingling of earth and sea in the suggestiveness of the noises, in the singing of the canary, in the working of the helm, in the many voices below raised in a song of praise, and in the low and indescribable thunder of the surge at the bow, rising high in hills of glittering blue to the plunging of the steamer, produced an effect of melancholy and of wonder in the mind. It was the uniting of conditions utterly opposed, the voice of the land with the deeper notes of old ocean seeking to whelm it. I suggest the cause; but, any way, it is certain I was glad when the singing ceased, when the canary had finished its song, so that I could hear in their pureness the organ notes of the deep alongside, and the coherent utterance of the ship swinging through the billows to that deep-throated melody. One at a time, no matter which! but to be

a lonely listener to the sounds which reached me that morning puts such fancies into one's head as makes one glad to step on deck, and see the clear sunshine and the glad and frothing sea, and to mark the buoyant speeding of the steamer through the radiant, life-helping scene.*

We were still well north of the Equator, and thundering down the North-east Trades with the splutter that a line-of-battleship would raise, when Christmas Day arrived. It was a magnificent wind that blew, chasing us briskly on our port-quarter, and quickening the steamer's wake into living masses of broken water, creaming and sparkling in a thousand fantastic gambols, with here and there a sea-bird sweeping over the smoking tumble, and ever and anon screaming out a hoarse note of defiance to the wrangle of waters beneath. You needed the sight of a sailing ship to interpret the poetry of this warm and noble wind. At times it blew what sailors would call a top-gallant breeze, and then it was you looked for some clipper fabric away to port or starboard—to starboard best—for to leeward you would see the heel of her, her bright sheathing (for one would fain have her a wooden craft) gleaming with dolphin-like tints as she leaps from the blue swell to the glimmering green head of the serpentine surge, flashing ruddy there a moment ere burying herself to her wash-streak in the

* "Oh, wingèd bark! how swift along the night
Pass'd thy proud keel! nor shall I let go by
Lightly of that drear hour the memory,
When wet and chilly on thy deck I stood
Unbonnetted, and gazed upon the flood,
Even till it seem'd a pleasant thing to die,—
To be resolv'd into th' elemental wave,
Or take my portion with the winds that rave."

CHARLES LAMB.

heaving of foam boiling aft from under her dolphin striker.

In order to fitly celebrate Christmas Day the head steward and waiters had gone to work to decorate the saloon. There was a little store of mistletoe on board, along with plenty of green stuff, which they wreathed about the lamps and hung festoon-wise about the ceiling and the iron beams under the spacious music-saloon. There were also rosettes in many colours and cheery legends for the decorations of the doors, and scarf-like paper-hangings; so that by the time the waiters had done their work the place wore a most festive and radiant appearance. I remember, whilst standing in the gallery that looked down upon the saloon, being much struck by a very charming picture of four o'clock tea. Several tables covered with red cloths were all ashine with what the late Lord Lytton would call the tea equipage. The sun shone brightly upon the scene; the dresses of the ladies, the light costumes of the gentlemen, the waiters in white trousers and blue jackets, the many Christmas decorations backed by the lustre in the hand-painted panels, the irradiation reverberated from the mirrors, the sand-white decks half concealed by lengths of handsome carpet, fascinated the gaze with their scores of elegant and softly-coloured details combining into a scene full of warmth and life. Yet I am not sure that Captain Travers fully appreciated the head steward's taste. He would sometimes give me a nudge in the ribs or softly kick me under the table, that I might mark the expression on the steward's face as he pointed out to the waiters on chairs how to match the rosettes and how to festoon the intervals between them.

The plum-pudding was a failure. There was a curious rumour that the singular sloppiness of it had provoked

some tears from one cook and dark threats from the other. Plum-pudding is all very well on Christmas Day at home when, snow or no snow, the indications of the thermometer serve as an apology for dyspepsia. But plum-pudding heavy, dark, and on fire within a few hundred miles of the equator, when the light of the sun has a distinct sting in it, and when gentlemen who undertake to eat the dish go to work upon it in duck trousers, no waistcoat, and faces inflamed with perspiration, is a rather serious thing. It is like hot pea-soup and the smoking roast leg of pork, not to mention the iron-like sausage and the liver and bacon—the bacon all lean, and cut in stout steaks—which they will insist upon serving up when the sun stands right overhead, and the following breeze leaves the atmosphere on deck a dead and scarce breathable heat. There was no case of inebriety worth mentioning on Christmas Day, if I except the mysterious steward to whom I before referred, and who impressed most of us as a species of decayed nobleman in disguise. A very little excited this gentleman, and somebody having apparently treated him to a glass or two, he was to be found in dark corners, sometimes sullenly and sometimes very demonstratively, arguing with other waiters. I watched his face dusky with crimson heat, his lustreless eyes, and his generally limp person, as first one waiter and then another drove him from corner to corner. But he insisted upon arguing as he went, smiting his shirt front and representing himself in what Charles Dickens would call ventral accents as an outraged man who had fallen into this melancholy pass, not as was basely supposed through liquor, but, as he knew only too well, through a Wicked Woman with a capital W.

New Year's Eve gave us better entertainment than Christmas Day had. Captain Travers had a magic

lantern, and in addition to this lantern he possessed a little hand-organ which emitted music by rolling out or rolling in, I really forget which, a great length of paper pricked with notes. Portions of this paper were torn, and when these parts came to the organ the melodies took a decidedly intoxicated character. He gave us a magic-lantern show on New Year's Eve, accompanied by his paper-organ arrangement. His theory of cheerfulness did not exactly hit the proposed end. With the idea of making us jolly and happy, he submitted to us a series of dissolving views of the most melancholy nature. The clergyman, who had now slightly recovered his voice, was good enough to undertake to read aloud from the little book that explained the story of the pictures; and the story, so far as I can recollect, referred largely to a shipwrecked sailor who had been brought ashore in a lifeboat only to find his child dying and the mother sometimes praying over the child's cradle and sometimes fainting away in a church-tower after ringing the bell for no other object that I could determine than to enable the ship's doctor, who was nearly dead with heat behind the screen, to strike a tumbler with a spoon. The chief interest, however, gathered about the child, who was perpetually shifting its posture in every next dissolving view, and obstinately declining to give up the ghost on any account whatever. There was some little sniffing amongst the female audience, and the only expression of hilarity that broke from us sitting in profound darkness—for the lamps had been extinguished to show up the views—was when the profile of the doctor, who assisted the captain to work the slides, showed in strongly marked proportions at the instant when we all expected to see the shipwrecked sailor rendered happy for ever by the complete recovery of the baby.

However, when the performance was over, when the lamps had been relighted, when Captain Travers had emerged, mopping himself with a large pocket-handkerchief, and when we had all gathered round several bowls of iced champagne punch, our spirits, disordered by the shipwrecked sailor and his baby, returned to us, and before long found expression in song. It was a genial illustration of the health-yielding properties of the voyage that a gentleman who had joined the ship at Southampton with a face of the colour of boiled veal, and who had undertaken the journey to cure some mischief in the lung, and to get rid of a persistent and very troublesome cough, should have risen after his third glass and, without being called upon, delivered, in high notes, indeed, but with plenty of wind power in their utterance, the fine old song, "Here's a Health unto His Majesty." Equally startling was the effect produced upon us after about the fifth glass by the quite unexpected and wholly unsolicited rising of an immensely fat and, as we had all deemed, hopelessly phlegmatic German from his chair. For some moments the silence that attended this gentleman's feat of getting on to his legs was broken only by the hissing sounds of water rushing past outside and by the ceaseless sighing and snarling of the hydraulic tiller worked in the wheel-house overhead. Then the German gentleman broke forth; he gave us the "Reiterlied" from Schiller's "Wallenstein's Lager;" and as there were some Germans amongst us, the conclusion of this handsome ditty, sung to the inspiration of punch, was attended with no little applause.

When the commander sang in an excellent baritone the famous old song, "The Lass That Loves a Sailor," one found one's self appreciating the need of the existence of more qualities in the captain of an ocean passenger

steamer than the mere sailorly capacity of guiding her in safety from port to port. It will not do to contend that the master of a great steamer should be simply a sailor. Let him be *that* unquestionably; but in these days the character of a mariner requires to be largely supplemented. You look for courtesy and sympathy, for a refinement of manner that need not necessarily suggest the polish of the drawing-room, but that must assuredly be of a kind to denote and distinguish the gentleman. The captain of a passenger vessel stands in the position of host to the people who sail with him, and it is very distinctly in his power to make them happy and contented, or dissatisfied and ill at ease, by the attitude he chooses to adopt in his relations with them. A rough seaman may very properly have charge of a coaster or a cargo steamer; but the coarse laugh, the blunt address, the imperfect English with which maritime theorists have endowed the English skipper, are by no means to the liking of ladies and gentlemen, the majority of whom scarcely tolerate the sea-dog even upon the stage. There is really no reason why a man should not be a first-rate sailor as well as a gentleman in breeding and behaviour. I pause an instant here to bear testimony to the popularity of the commander with whom I was briefly associated, to qualities of culture to which a professional ingenuousness communicated the peculiar freshness that most of us note and relish in the bearing and speech of the sailor who is also a gentleman and a person of intellect and education. It must be often desperately hard, I fully believe, for the shipmaster to bear with much that he has to encounter during his voyages. Shortly after we had left Madeira a second-class passenger wrote a letter to Captain Travers, asking him if there was anything eatable to be purchased on board

the ship, and referring him to a gentleman's valet, who was also a second-class passenger, as a witness to the poverty of the food served out. What sort of food second-class passengers were provided with I have already given instances of. The accusation was false, the reference to the valet insolent, the whole tone of the letter in the last degree offensive. Yet the commander showed no temper; he patiently inquired into the matter, and, so far from exhibiting resentment, he ordered the steward to provide the grumbling passenger's wife, who was in very bad health, with one of the most comfortable of the first-class cabins, and made her and her growling partner and their daughter welcome to the hurricane deck, that is used by first-class passengers only. I greatly admired the tact and temper in all this; but I also guessed that one of your rough and ready seamen would have hardly imagined such a policy, or that he would have been incapable of practising it if he had imagined it. Certainly amongst the responsibilities and duties of the commander of a mail steamer I would include the obligation of being a gentleman.*

We broke off in the midst of our harmless revelry to witness a little performance of marine fireworks. These consisted of blue and green lights and Roman candles, along with a night life buoy signal; that is to say, a flame that kindles from contact with the water and burns steadily. The sight was one to be remembered. The

* In some lines it is the custom for the mates to mess together. They are not allowed to enter the saloon, to mix with the passengers, or even to address them. These men are graduating for command; but until they obtain command they are not permitted any sort of education outside their strictly professional duties! It is inevitable that when men thus restricted become captains, they should be awkward and at a loss in their relations with passengers until they get the experience and ease which they might have acquired as mates.

night was dusky with cloud, but from time to time amidst the broken wings of vapour in the starboard sky, the planet Venus, "Ladye of Moysture" as she has been called, glorious, bland, and beautiful, would shine out with the quick light of a little moon, glancing a wake of icy brilliance upon the weltering indigo beneath, amid which the phosphorus winked like swarms of emerald-tinctured fireflies; she gave a bright silver lining to every cloud she sprang from and to every cloud that approached her, and she flung a mist-like sheen upon a wide circumference of the sky, amid which the lesser stars languished or were wholly eclipsed as by a full moon. The fabric of the ship, her hull, spars, funnel, and rigging, rendered phantasmal by the darkness, stole out into a fairy delicacy of outline to the green or blue illuminations; and walking well forwards (for these signals were thrown up from the quarter deck), you saw the great steamer clearly lined by an irradiation whose hues rendered her as mystical as a phantom vessel, standing out against the blackness over the stern, whilst the headlong waters over her side swept past in an ever-broadening hurry of foam, one minute green as grass, then blood-red, as the wild lights burned.

It was a memorable thing, too, the sudden flashing up of the white signal flame when the apparatus was dropped into the sea. There were no coloured lights then; the ship loomed up black to the dark bodies of vapour over the mast-heads, and the sea line encompassed us with an inky circle, with no break of foam to relieve the impenetrable shadow save the throbbing and pallid whiteness streaming like a boiling river away into the liquid gloom from under our counter. It was *there* where the beacon shone, sparkling and vanishing as it rose and fell. For a long twenty minutes I stood

watching it, with my mind full of the true significance of the steadfast light faithfully burning amidst the wonderful desolation of that mighty scene of dark waters, and of stars glimmering wan amid the breaks of slowly moving clouds. Fancy grew sharp, indeed, for it was a moment to heighten imagination. You watched the light and thought of a lonely man out there grasping with despairing hold the buoy whose exact spot was indicated by the little flame. A chill unfelt before came off the sea to that thought, and you seemed to hear a moan that was like a distant cry of anguish in the night wind, freshening for a breath to the roll of the ship and sweeping with added weight through the shrouds that vanished in the darkness above the decks.

But there was more iced champagne punch below, and before long we were all gathered again around the saloon tables, where we sat singing, telling stories, and laughing gaily, yet all of us waiting secretly for eight bells to strike—midnight!

The chimes announcing the birth of the New Year rang out, and, instantly rising, we crossed hands, and sang "Auld lang syne" in a hurricane chorus that might have been heard a league distant. Which, being ended, we fell to shaking hands, addressing a hundred kindnesses to one another, for whatever may follow disembarkation, one thing is certain: that on board ship the spirit of friendship is cordial and generous. And not yet to bed, as Pepys would say; for scarcely had we ended our congratulations when there entered a procession of waiters, dressed up in such absurd costumes as are only practicable on shipboard, where the most impossible finery and the most ridiculous clothing are eagerly seized and rendered preposterous by contrast. This procession of men rang bells, played fiddles, beat

upon biscuit-tins, and sang songs, detaining us with a score of amusing fooleries, until some one excited a certain consternation amongst a section of us by looking at his watch and saying it was half-past one. Then indeed to bed, but for a whole hour I lay awake listening to the faint chorussing on deck of a party of passengers who had determined to make a night of it, and to the ever-rushing sounds of water alongside, perpetually assuring us of swift and safe progress through the pathless obscurity, let the night be what festival it might, let our humours be what they would, let our forgetfulness of our situation be as complete as if we were dreaming of a bright New Year in our beds at home with our little ones peacefully sleeping under the same roof, and the homes of valued friends around.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC.

One evening, no matter day or date, we were on the parallel of St. Helena. Call our latitude broadly sixteen degrees South. I had gone on to the forecastle, a fine broad topgallant deck, for the sake of the fresh breezes that blew there and for the delight I found in watching the water breaking from the bows and spinning away astern in dim sheets of snow charged with a thousand flickerings of phosphorus. There was a streak of reddish moon fast westering, but it yielded no light to sea or sky. It was a dark evening, though the heavens were radiant with stars, with Venus—always an orb of rich and exquisitely

soft and tender beauty—now irradiating the velvet blackness upon our starboard beam.

I leaned, full of thought, upon the rail, gazing seawards into the infinite distance, thinking of the rugged, lonely, historic rock that lay leagues away down in the far West, and of the figure that must ever dominate that island's traditions—that famous shape of marble countenance, of drooped head and folded arms, standing as, somehow, one loves to picture him, on the very margin of the abrupt fall at whose foot the rollers raise their startling thunders, and gazing under knitted brows into the liquid junction of heaven and ocean at God knows what wild scenes, at what enormous visions, at what thrilling spectacles, real and past, or fanciful and foreboded.

It was much about this parallel, but nearer to the island, that there happened one of those wild and extraordinary tragedies of the deep which are deemed incredible when imitated or repeated in a work of fiction. I will briefly relate the story, as it will lead me to an incident I desire to embody in these chapters.

On such another night as this I am describing, a large full-rigged ship was sailing quietly along. The starlight transmuted each ripple, rolling sluggishly away from her stem, into a line of silver wire. There was just enough draught to hold her sails steady. It was midnight—not a sound broke the stillness upon the vessel's decks, unless it were the low murmur of the voices of the first and second mates seated on the afterhatch, one exchanging a few words with the other before he went below. The master was in his cabin sound asleep. The starboard watch arrived on deck, took a lazy look round, and, as the custom of seamen is in fine, clear, warm weather, stowed themselves away under the

bulwarks or under the lee of the long-boat for a nap, but ready for the first call from the quarter-deck.

There were on board two Indian coolies who had been shipped at Manilla; one was in the port, the other in the starboard watch, and it was noticed by the port watch when they went below at midnight that the Indian belonging to their number remained on deck. The sailors had stowed themselves away, as I have said, and the mates were still conversing when the two coolies stepped aft, and both of them drawing close to the mates, one of them exclaimed that he felt sick. The speech was a signal; swift as thought the sharp knives of the Indians flashed and fell, again and yet again. The chief mate sank, mortally wounded; the second mate staggered to the cabin door, and calling out, "Captain Clarke! Captain Clarke!" fell dead.

The master of the vessel being awakened by the second mate's cry of anguish, sprang from his bed and made for the steps of the after companion, his notion being that they were about to collide with a ship that had been sighted ahead at sundown, and that they had been steadily overhauling. Scarce had he gained the companion ladder when he was violently stabbed on the top of his head, and at the same moment a hand grasped his throat. He was in his night-dress and unarmed, and all that he could do was to strike fiercely at his assailant's eyes, hoping to blind him. The Indian however, unhurt, continued to stab at the captain, who descended the ladder step by step, striking out aimlessly and madly for his life. At the foot of the steps he slipped in the blood that covered the treads, and fell headlong back into the cabin with a frightful wound in his left side. The Indian, supposing him to be dead, ran on deck, whereupon the captain crawled to where his revolver was, and again

feebly staggered up the companion, and called to the man at the wheel to shut the door.

The fellow replied, "I can't, sir."

"Why not?" cried the captain.

"There's somebody there," was the reply.

"Who is there?" demanded the captain.

"I don't know, sir," responded the fellow.

The master had his wife and child on board, and his first thought were for them. He could not imagine what had happened, but his idea was that the whole crew had mutinied, and that his life was to be sacrificed. He was faint and bleeding dreadfully, yet was crawling towards his wife's cabin when a man came rolling down the companion steps. He thought it was the Indian who had stabbed him; quickly turned and covered the figure with his revolver.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "Who are you? what is this mutiny about?"

The fellow proved to be one of the sailors, half paralyzed by terror. He crouched and knelt before the captain crying, "Oh, hide me, captain! hide me!" and that was all his agony of fright suffered him to say.

The master, believing himself to be fast bleeding to death, fell down on a mat in the corner of the cabin, yet ever with a trembling and languid hand holding his pistol levelled in the direction of the companion. His wife applied herself to staunch the blood and dress his wounds. Whilst this was doing the coolies smashed the skylight window, and one told the other in bastard Spanish to jump below. The captain fired at them, on which they rushed away, uttering many oaths and exhibiting great surprise and alarm. Very soon after they had vanished a dreadful cry was heard on deck, followed by a short scuffle, and it was known that the

man at the wheel, a seaman named Malony, had been stabbed and flung overboard. This was followed by another cry, and then another. The cook, who was a Chinaman, and whose life the two coolies spared, afterwards declared these shrieks came from the carpenter and a seaman, both of whom the Indians had murdered.

Besides the slain men there were four whom the coolies had wounded. These fellows had run to the forecastle for protection, and here the ship's company barricaded themselves. They of course by this time knew that the murderers were but two slender, puny, Indian coolies, creatures whom an English Jack would be able to break the backs of by putting them against his knee. Yet these hardy Yankee mariners were so demoralized by terror that instead of arming themselves with a handspike or two and springing on deck and knocking out the brains of the brace of black villains they fortified their little forecastle, and lay in it trembling and panic-stricken. One of the sailors was left on deck.

"As I could not get forward," he says, "I ran up the mizzen rigging and got on to the crossjackyard. I then saw them kill Malony at the wheel. He offered no resistance, and I heard him beg hard for his life. I remained aloft, and saw them at two a.m. on Sunday murder the carpenter, and shortly afterwards they dragged a sailor from the carpenter's shop, murdered him near the mainmast, and threw him overboard. Having done this they sharpened a couple of axes and fixed knives to long sticks with which they tried to stab the captain and his wife in the cabin. They wanted me to come down, but I knew they only asked me to do that in order to murder me. I had no knife with me, otherwise I should have cut off blocks and hurled them at the two coolies. I managed, however, to cast one block

adrift, and secure it to the end of a gasket, so that I should have some weapon to use if the Indians approached me. At eight o'clock in the evening, it being then dark, I felt the rigging shake, and, looking below, I saw one of the coolies raising his arm to strike upwards at me. I hit at him with the block, but missed him, and he descended the rigging to the deck. This so terrified me that I climbed as high as the royal yard, and stayed there all night."

The coolies approaching the cabin skylight, one was shot in the breast by the captain. Both of them immediately rushed forward, threw a spare spar overboard, and one jumped into the sea, whilst the other dropped down into the 'tween decks. Seeing this, the sailor who was aloft came hand over fist down on to the deck, and shouted out to the captain to break out of the cabin. At the same moment the sailors ran out of the forecastle. Meanwhile the coolie in the 'tween decks was hard at work setting the ship on fire. Two seamen armed with revolvers jumped below to hunt him out, and they shot him in the shoulder; but by this time the smoke was pouring out densely from the hatchway, and the coolie, half hidden by it, gained the deck, and sprang overboard. Both wretches were seen in the water holding on to the spar; but shots were fired at them, and after a little they sank. The ship was on fire, and burning rapidly. There was no chance of saving her, so a boat was provisioned, the crew entered her, and after hanging about the ship during Monday night, in the hope that the flames would bring assistance, they put some blankets together for a sail and headed for St. Helena. The vessel was an American vessel, and the ship's company, who had been overawed and rendered helpless through terror by two miserable coolies, must have

numbered at the beginning of the mutiny no less than twenty-three souls.*

A sea story is never better heard or thought on than at sea. A hundred meanings which are lost ashore steal into the narrative. You felt in a peculiar degree the horror and strangeness of the tale I have briefly outlined when you gazed round upon the vast shadow that encompassed the rushing steamer. I leaned against the rail with the speeding whirlpool under me trembling to the heavy gloom that filled the gaze from the roaring edge of the stream of white water to the horizon, picturing, with the aid of the inspiration of the stars fitfully winking in white and blue and green and of the scar of moon gathering a dingy purple as she floated slowly down the westward dusk which seemed to thicken on the sea line, that theatre of shipboard on which had been enacted as extraordinary a tragedy of marine life as ever I had heard of. The picture drew out phantomlike from the shadow. There were the white decks dim in the midnight radiance, the figures of the unsuspecting mates, dark forms seated together, putting a thin murmur of human voices into the quiet breathing of the night wind, the sneaking shapes of the two coolies with a gleam of steel in the hand they carried behind them, walking to where those unsuspecting seamen sat, pausing an instant when they had drawn close, one making his complaint in barbarous broken English, then both of them in a breath smiting the two men, dealing death-wound after death-wound!

Ay, 'tis at night time upon the sea that all that happened in such a tale as this comes to a man's intelligence with a wild significance in it. I had so worked up

* Since this was written there have been published two or three different versions of this extraordinary story. The evidence, as I have repeated it here, was given in the Cape papers.

my imagination by thinking over this amazing and horrid picture of murder, treachery, and miserable cowardice, that I started "like a guilty thing surprised" on suddenly hearing a footstep behind me.

I peered and said, "Who is that?"

The man lifted his hand to his cap and answered, "Brooks, sir."

Well, now, thought I, that *you* of all living men on board this ship should come to me at this moment! Does the reader recollect the loss two years ago, far to the westwards of where the *Tartar* was just now steaming, and some degrees further to the South, of a little yacht called the *Mignonette?* It was a terrible story, worse in its way, I think, than that of the Yankee ship I was dreaming about when Brooks's approach broke in upon my fancies. There were three men and a boy in her; the boy was killed and partly eaten by the crew, one of whom was Brooks, who now stood before me with his naturally pale face white as a corpse's in the starlight. Of course, I had all along known that he was on board. More than one person in the vessel recollected the interest I had shown in the fearful story; and Brooks had been early pointed out to me as an able seaman making his second voyage in the *Tartar*. I had watched him often furtively, yet narrowly. My sympathy with sailors caused me to find something of profoundest interest in a seaman who had undergone the wildest extremity, who had passed through the most shocking experience that the utmost cruelty of the sea can impose upon her children. It was the capacity, perhaps, of realizing what his sufferings had been, what his memory still retained, that induced me to note in the character of his face, and in the expression of it, points that might have been missed by one to whom he appealed merely

as a man who had suffered one of the trials of a sailor's life. His eyes were sunken, exposure to the weather had failed to darken the pallid, unwholesome hue of his complexion, and the habitual cast of his countenance was one of melancholy. Knowing what he had undergone and what his recollection must preserve, you would have regarded him as a man permanently oppressed and rendered bitterly sad by the memory of those dreadful days in a little open boat. His shipmates might hardly share these views. I do not indeed know that he was held in much esteem as a sailor man. Enough if I speak of the impression I got by watching him.

"Oh! it is you, Brooks?" said I.

"Yes, sir," he answered.

"I believe," said I, speaking with some hesitation, for I hardly knew how he would relish the most cautious approach to the subject, "that had I lingered a little longer here I should have found myself thinking of the *Mignonette* and of your adventures in her."

He remained silent.

"It was somewhere on this parallel," I continued, "that that frightful incident of the American ship happened. The *Mignonette* foundered further South?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, "in twenty-seven degrees South latitude, and in ten degrees West longitude. That's where we took to the boat."

"There were four of you?"

"Yes, Dudley the captain, Stevens mate, myself, and —and" he added, with a stammer, "the poor lad Parker."

"What was the tonnage of the vessel?"

"Thirty-two tons, sir."

"You were bound to Sydney, I remember; a long voyage to undertake in so small a craft."

"I would start again to-morrow," he exclaimed. "We did very well till that sea came and knocked her in. We should have been all right had she been a sound boat. I have heard some people wonder," he continued, gaining confidence, "how it happened that we were so far to the westwards; but our course was right enough. Dudley's idea was to get all he could out of the Trades. I suppose nothing would have been said about his judgment in that matter if we had brought the craft to Sydney safely."

"It was a story that painfully interested me when I read it."

"I know it, sir, and I am very thankful for what you did."

"I did my best. It would have been far easier to denounce than to defend the act. Since it came to what it did, it would have been better had you put fair-play into the shocking business by casting lots; but it is not for well-fed men to sit in judgment upon such anguish as yours. If high motive, if manly conduct, be witnessed in human extremity and misery, complicated by all that the sea can throw into it of hopelessness and the heart-breaking mockery of expectation, then indeed you get the highest form of nobleness humanity is capable of. But no man has a right to denounce the failure of the most heroic and admirable resolutions in fellow-creatures when their physical sufferings must be such as to weaken the brain and distort the very truest of manly instincts. When I wrote about you I put myself in your place, and conceiving what the madness of thirst is, and what frightful deeds men and women have been goaded into committing by hunger, God forbid that I should dare to say, not knowing to what deed the craze of famine might urge me, *Had I been you, I should have acted otherwise.*"

"I'll speak for myself, sir," he exclaimed, talking with a little hurry in his manner. "I did not consent to the act. I was ignorant of it, though what I did afterwards by participating made me in a manner guilty too. Yet I look back," he said, pressing his hands to his breast, "and feel that what was done was forced upon us by want of a kind an ignorant man like me couldn't make you understand, though I should go on talking about it all night long. For who's going to explain what thirst is? it must be felt; and who's going to relate what promptings and feelings come into the head with the madness you are sensible of, when the mouth is full of froth, when your body seems on fire, and a mortal sickness makes your eyes reel till the horizon swings round and round as though your boat was fixed atop of a spinning teetotum? I say, I look back and, feeling that what was done was forced upon us, I can't make up my mind to believe that the act was the wicked thing it has been called."

"I should like to have your version of the story," said I, "unless, indeed, you object to refer to the subject."

He answered that he was quite willing to talk about it, and he repeated with energy that he felt he was not to blame, and that he could look back without dread or disgust to what had happened during those truly frightful days he had passed in the *Mignonette's* boat.

"We were bound, as you know," said he, "to Sydney, in New South Wales, and when we were in the South Atlantic in the latitude and longitude I have given you, we met with some very heavy weather that lasted many days. It was on one of these days that the cutter shipped a great sea which started the timber heads and forced the planks out underneath. Stevens was steering

at the time; he let go the tiller, tossed up his hands, and cried out in a wild voice, 'Oh, my God, there's a hole in the side!' We saw that there was no hope for the cutter; she was sinking fast, and bound to go down with us in her if we did not bear a hand. So in a violent hurry we got the boat over—she was a cedar built boat, fourteen feet long by four feet two inches wide, built at Brightlingsea, I believe. All that we took with us was a couple of tins of turnip; one of these we chucked into the boat, the other we found floating. While the boat was alongside the lad Parker went below in the cutter and got a half breaker of water; but it rolled overboard and was lost, so we started with nothing to drink, and with nothing to eat but two tins of turnips. No time was given us, for the *Mignonette* sank in less than five minutes after she had been stove in. There were two small oars in the boat, and the sea being very high we made a sea-anchor of the gratings, an empty breaker, bottom boards, and one or two other such things, and hove the raffle overboard and rode to it. There was a hole at the bottom of the boat, and the water came in fast through it, but this we stopped with a piece of waste. For thirteen days we had stormy weather and high seas. On the third day after launching the boat, we broached one of the tins of turnip. We were hungry, full of gnawing pains, and we were wet through to the skin, and every bone in us was tormented with a feeling as of being bruised, as though we had been hammered all over. Our being soaked made the wind come with a feeling as of an edge of frost in it. Day and night, day and night this went on, and I don't know that the day wasn't as bad as the night, unless it was that the blackness caused the seas to wear a fiercer look, whilst there was nothing to see but the white heads

of them running at us, and a star or two dim as the riding-lights of ships a league distant, coming and going overhead. On the fourth day a turtle came washing past us; we caught him and drank his blood, which was as sweet a draught as ever I remember swallowing. We made the flesh of him last us till the thirteenth day. God knows how we contrived it, but I am giving you the truth, sir. I'll not tell you how we managed for drink, though it seems strange that sailors should have to suffer more than the public have the courage to hear. We made shift to catch a little rain now and again; whenever a shower came we would hold out our tarpaulin coats like this."

He extended his arms, and there was an extraordinary pathos in the gesture, so full was it of the acting of a man impassioned by burning memory into ghastly life-like action. I watched his white face in the pale reflection from the skies, and heard him sigh deeply, as though fetching his breath, when he let his extended arms drop to his side.

"We let the boat drift," he continued, "in the daytime, but regularly at night we got our sea-anchor over, and rode to it. It was the thirteenth day, and in all that time never an object hove in view to give an instant's hope to us. Then, on the thirteenth day, one of us proposed that we should contrive to make a sail; so we pulled off our shirts and secured them together, and made a mast and yard of the oars, and headed about North-West, driving along before the weather. We had no food, no drink," he continued, in a trembling voice, suddenly subdued into a faintness of articulation that obliged me to lean my head forward, "till the boy Parker was killed. He lay in the bottom of the boat feeble and ill, but I will not say—I will not say he was

dying. I was sitting in the bows with my face covered up, dozing, when I was awakened by a sound of scuffling and kicking, and on opening my eyes I saw Dudley bending over the boy—— I fainted away——"

Here he broke off, and remained silent, half turning from me.

"Enough!" I exclaimed; "how were you rescued? I forget the ending of the story."

"We were picked up," he answered, "by a German barque. 'Twas the wife of the captain of her who was the first to see us. We sighted them long before they spied us. I was the only man able to throw the oars over and row. Dudley tried, and fell over the thwarts. There, sir," he exclaimed, abruptly confronting me, "I think I have told you all."

This narrative had long been familiar to me. I had read the particulars as published at the time, with amazement and pity as, no doubt, had scores of others; but though my familiarity with ocean-life had qualified me to see pretty deep into the pathos, the anguish, and the horror of this tale, I confess that the hearing of it again from the lips of one of the actors in it, coupled with the circumstance of my listening to it upon the deck of a ship steaming through a dusky night, communicated such colour and such vitality to the terrible incident as made me feel, when Brooks ceased, and stood with folded arms gazing silently into the obscurity over the bow, as if I had shared in the misery of that time, and had been a spectator of the lonely and shocking tragedy. Twice the ship's bell rang its powerful metallic chimes through our conversation; the bow wave, arching over from our sheering stem, rolled its electric note of thunder and of hissing rain past our ears as I questioned and my companion answered; you

noticed the flickering stars reeling at the naked mast-heads of the swaying steamship; on the bridge stalked the restless shape of the officer of the watch; voices reached us from the deck beyond the forecastle on which we stood; and, glancing aft, you saw here and there along the black outline of the great vessel the yellow beams of cabin lights striking spokes of lustre into the dusk that pressed like something tangible close against and down upon the sweeping fabric.

For a long half-hour after Brooks had left me I lingered upon the forecastle, thinking over the two stories which I have repeated in this chapter. If the romance of the sea lies in startling narratives of blood-shed, of famine, of shipwreck, such as we find in the old annals, shall we presume to say, in the face of such things as are here recited, and of the thousand thrilling and impressive incidents which fill the annual records of the shipping journals, that that romance has vanished? In truth the life of the sailor of to-day is not less crowded with incidents amazing in a hundred respects, and often rising to the marvellous, than was the life of the mariner of olden times. The pirate, the slaver, the fighting merchantman, have indeed passed away; but the ship-wreck; the lonely boat; the gaunt and hollow face of the starving seaman lifted in wild appeal to the blank unmeaning heavens; the fire casting its little world of crimson haze upon the midnight obscurity; the sinking ship, with all the heroism of the commander going to his grave as dutifully as the bravest of British mariners ever entered upon a battle; the raft with its perishing women and children; the savage, broiling coast with its hordes of coloured barbarians pillaging the helpless fabric and stripping the unhappy survivors of the wreck; still remain, are still perpetuated, and must I think for

the most part continue so long as man sets sail upon the ocean and takes his chance of what he may encounter.

No! romance is yet an abounding element in maritime life, and every year witnesses the increase of its possibilities and the enlargement of its sphere in the ever-growing numbers of vessels following or facing the flight of the sun and traversing the deep from one Polar region to the other.

CHAPTER X.

MISSING!

At the distance of about half a mile on the port bow one morning I noticed some floating wreckage. We passed the raffle swiftly, and in a very short time it had vanished astern as utterly as had the fabric of which this timber was the lingering fragments. There was a greenish tinge upon some of the pieces, suggesting that the stuff had been floating about for a long time. A missing ship! "posted" months and months since, and now, perchance, as wholly gone out of human memory as the obscure dead who were buried one hundred years ago. 'Tis a curious subject for reflection that when such a mail-steamer as I am now aboard of goes "a-missing," the story takes the impressiveness of a national memory; whilst three or four vessels of an aggregate burden of five thousand tons, and containing in ships' companies as many souls as a large passenger steamer would carry, may be "posted," one after the other within a fortnight, and yet win but little attention outside the maritime,

owning, or insuring circles interested in what happens at sea. Let an ocean passenger steamer be overdue by three or four days, and the air becomes full of alarming reports. Every hour after a given time deepens anxiety, until expectation grows almost insufferable. You have seen instances of this in recent times through a vessel breaking her propeller shaft, or sustaining damage in the engine-room, and resolving to sail to port. But let a steamer of four or five thousand tons, and with two or three hundred people on board, be overdue by ten days or a fortnight, and eventually be classed amongst the lost—it need not be hard to realize the impression that would be produced.

It is five years short of half a century ago that the *President* was given up as a foundered ship. It is true that in those days the opportunities which are now plentiful for determining loss were comparatively few. There were many sailing ships upon the Atlantic; but there were no vast processions of steamers embracing an oceanic area that would prohibit all doubt as to the fate of a ship after a given interval. Yet enough of certainty must have attended the conjectures as to the fate of the *President* to render the long enduring of hope one of the most pathetic features of annals which are full of pathos. The *President* was due in Liverpool from New York in March, 1841; yet as late as May, and for weeks after, reports were current as to her safety, which were greedily accepted. As a missing ship, this vessel is singularly typical of the effect produced by a form of marine disaster which leaves nothing certain but that the beloved face will never more be seen, the familiar voice never more be heard. My sympathy with the sailor makes me feel as often as I hear of a cargo vessel being "posted" as if a very grave wrong were done to the memory of the

drowned seamen by the unconcern with which the great mass of the public receive the news—that same great mass, I mean, who would be stirred to the heart by the report of the foundering of a passenger steamer. It may be that there is a disposition to assume that Jack is used to being drowned, and that therefore his sufferings are not to be compared with those of passengers who are rudely awakened from their warm beds in the cabins by terrified cries on deck, and the strangling rushings of water. Yet there is many a sailor who has his little home, who when he signs articles for a ship says farewell to a father or a mother, to a wife or to children. I confess that I think upon such men's claims on our sorrow and our sympathy when I hear of a ship having gone "a-missing." The report that a vessel has not been heard of since such and such a date, and that therefore it is supposed she has foundered with all hands, ought, I think, to take something, however trifling, of the significance we discover with full hearts and anxious faces in the news that an ocean passenger ship is overdue by a few days.

Why do ships go a-missing? If yonder vanished weed-coloured fragments could speak, what would be their tale? Of all vain and hopeless literature, I know nothing more vain and more hopeless than the reports of the inquiries held by the courts constituted for that purpose into supposed losses at sea. The courts do their best, the nautical assessors put on their wisest faces, but, after long fathoms of examination and cross-examination, during which surveyors, builders, owners, stevedores, and other persons of a like kind, are harassed for ideas, it generally ends in the court stating, in stereotyped language, that there is very little doubt that the ship foundered, but why it is quite impossible to con-

jecture, unless the cause were ice, or collision, or a gale of wind, or the loss of masts, or the shifting of cargo, or the striking upon a submerged object, or the springing of a leak, and so on. Conjectures so ample can scarcely miss the truth. It is like firing at an object with a quantity of small shot, of which one, at least, is pretty sure to hit the mark. The court rises, but the fact remains a secret of the deep.

When one thinks of the numberless perils which ships go begirt with—perils deliberately contrived by the hand of man and perils over which the seaman has no control, and which are, therefore, very properly characterized as the "act of God"—the wonder is not that so many ships are posted as "Missing," but that disasters should not be very much more frequent and dire than is now the case. I received the other day from New York a newspaper-cutting telling the story of a fever-stricken ship. The vessel was named the *Joseph Farwell*, and at one time all hands were down and helpless with Chagres fever, of which the captain and three of the crew died, leaving only two men, in a sick and miserable condition, to carry the vessel home through violent weather, and through a passage that seems to have lasted for some weeks. Difficult as it is to believe, there can be no question that many vessels which have sailed away from port and never been heard of again have foundered through the sickness and death of the crew. One may suspect this from the many cases on record of ships which have only narrowly escaped destruction from fever rendering all hands helpless.

There was the case of the *Harkaway*, of London. She sailed from a place called Boma, up the Congo, and after a week or two the crew fell sick, the engineers had to give up, and the engines stopped from want of steam.

The captain alone kept his health, but his superhuman exertions in steering, shovelling coals to keep up steam, and attending on the sick crew, began to tell on him, and if he had not struggled to hold up for a day or two longer, when he managed to reach Bathurst, River Gambia, the vessel, as the account says, "might probably have been driven about the ocean undiscovered for weeks, and all on board dead, as they were almost entirely out of the track of shipping."

Then there was the brigantine *Marie Annie*, that was encountered at sea, with the captain and six of the crew dying from yellow fever, three men only capable of tottering about on their legs, and so ill as to be totally unable to manage the vessel. This same brigantine furnished the news of the disablement of the entire crew of a British barque named the *Emma* through the same malady. A little searching would enable me to furnish scores of such instances, but then, of course, these would all be cases of ships which have been in dire peril in consequence of the sickness of the crews. Of the numerous craft which have gone a-missing from this cause, whose interiors have been the theatres of sufferings unspeakable from the anguish and helplessness of fever, who can conjecture the number?

Faulty construction, too, may have proved more prolific of disaster ending in "posting" than the shipbuilders might feel disposed to admit. I remember reading the case of the *Penedo*, a vessel that in a moderate head sea, and when twenty miles off Porto Santo, broke in two, and foundered in a couple of minutes. This, to be sure, is a very violent illustration indeed of jerryism. Yet it is not necessary for vessels to break in halves in order to founder so rapidly that no lives are saved, and nothing more ever heard of them.

Some ships, but not many, I suspect, may have gone a-missing through a cause not a little romantic and striking. The second mate of a vessel named the *Silverhow* stated that when the ship was in lat. 51° South, long. 80° West, a huge meteor fell, raising as it hit the water near the vessel a sound louder than the report of a cannon. The second mate added that if the meteor had struck his vessel it would have sent her to the bottom. Another wonderful meteor fell close to the steamship *Lima;* and the United States man-of-war *Alaska* had a narrow escape from being destroyed by one of these blazing objects. The captain declared that "had the meteor struck the ship it would have been the last of the *Alaska*, and no one would have been left to tell the tale of her loss.*

* Since this was written, I have come across the subjoined account of a schooner, the *J. C. Ford*, that was set on fire by a meteor whilst on a voyage from the Pacific coast to Kahului. The narrative is contained in a letter, dated "Kahului, December 22, 1885," and addressed to the Honourable S. G. Wilder. It is signed "T. H. Griffiths, captain; B. J. Weight, passenger." On Saturday, December 12, according to the letter, being in latitude 23° 53′ N., longitude 143° 26′ W., at 1.30 p.m., the weather being fine and wind moderate, the first mate, Mr. Mercer, discovered the mizen staysail to be in flames at the masthead. With all possible speed the fire was put out by means of water, beating, and cutting away. "It is needless to say that all hands wondered at a fire occurring at the masthead, but the finding of fragments of some metallic-like substance showed us that something of a meteoric nature was the cause. Those on the deck were picking up burning fragments and throwing them overboard. Pieces of the strange substance were found at the base of the mainmast. A piece as large as a man's hand was thrown overboard, quite hot, by Mr. Weight, and a piece as large, or larger, which was burning the mainsail, was thrown overboard by one of the hands. The above are the facts, as we remember them, and as they are recorded on the ship's log. In the night previous the weather was clear, but meteors were very numerous, and the mate and man at the wheel noticed their frequency and numbers, and also that they would burst in a manner resembling a

Many a ship, in my opinion, has foundered out of hand, giving the people no time to get the boats over, through the breaking down of the steering gear. A dreadful instance of this occurred in the loss of the *Kenmure Castle*. The passengers and some Chinese were saved, and thus the particulars of the foundering came to be known; yet very little time was given, for scarcely had the boat shoved off when the steamer sank with thirty or forty men on board. It is in truth in directions towards which landsmen would never dream of directing their gaze that the worst sea perils often lie. There can, for instance, be very little doubt that the semi-submerged, dismasted derelict, the lumping half-sunken object, has caused many a well-found vessel to crush in her bows and take her last plunge. A master reports that on a clear but dark night, the steamer going slow, the look-out man cried out, "Starboard the helm; there's a ship under the bow." Ere the helm could be shifted the steamer had driven in between the two masts of a sunken vessel. How is a captain to provide against such a risk? What look-out, even if he had the eyes of an owl by night, and of an eagle by day, could sing out in time to prevent a vessel from plumping at full speed into the hull of a capsized craft of perhaps eight hundred tons, not the least portion of which is visible until it is so close as to render the promptest instructions worthless.

Here are two brief illustrations: The captain of a

rocket. No shock was noticed, the first intimation of the occurrence being the staysail in flames. Our theory is that the substance found is the crust of a meteor or fragment projected laterally. As there was a large quantity of kerosene and other combustible matter on deck, there were doubtless more than the two pieces thrown overboard in our anxiety to avoid disaster."

barque sights a ship that looks to be lying over on her port side, but, drawing near, he observes that what he mistook for a ship are the remains of two vessels. One was the after-part of a newly coppered vessel floating bottom up; the other was the side of a ship of about one thousand tons. Next a captain reports that about midnight, in clear weather, he passed close to a barque which had no lights and appeared to be abandoned, as no answer was made to his repeated hails. He took her to be a North American vessel of about nine hundred tons. We have but to imagine a very dark night and the weather thick to understand how fraught with danger must be such objects, such massive, floating obstructions as these shipmasters describe having passed. One hears a great deal of reckless navigation, and to judge from the letters which are constantly being published, written by masters of small coasting steamers, sailing vessels, and smacks, there is reason to fear that this unpardonable offence is on the increase. But the most cautious navigator can hardly be held accountable for running his ship in a thick black night into a wreck right in a fairway, and scarcely noticeable even in clear weather until close to.

Then, again, how many ships go a-missing through fire? A German captain says on such and such a date he sighted an unknown barque; he saw smoke issuing from her, bore down and found her on fire aft. Stayed by her until she was in a blaze from stem to stern. There was a lifeboat adrift near her containing some tobacco and provisions and a stone butter-pot. The German captain adds that nothing living was to be seen. In all possibility the crew had been taken off by a passing vessel. But how many ships, one would like to know, have been met burning furiously, with their crews

perhaps not above fifteen or twenty miles distant in boats, but destined never to be rescued? So, again, two hundred miles from Spurn Light, a large full-rigged ship is sighted burning furiously. When approached, she is found with her deck burnt away and the after-part consumed to the water's edge. Here, too, we find the crew vanished. But supposing them never to be heard of more, then assuredly this flaming nameless fabric becomes "a missing ship," and the character of her end may be ranked as among the deepest of ocean mysteries, even by the very captain who shifts his helm to bear down and look at her, and who leaves her as ignorant of her paternity as I am of the ship to whom the green and sodden bits of timber that went swirling past into our wake just now once belonged.

The shifting of cargo is another fruitful source of disaster ending in the missing ship. Indeed, the catalogue is a very great deal too long. We are a marvellously scientific generation, yet no seaman will contradict me, I think, when I state that one result of our improvements and inventions has been to increase the dangers of the ocean. It was only the other day that the captain of a passenger steamer of five thousand tons, newly arrived at the Albert Docks, wrote to me saying, "However I managed to get up the river without half a dozen collisions will always remain a mystery to me." In truth, the crowd gets decidedly too dense. Our sea-elbows are distinctly too much in other people's sea-ribs. But, for all that, the missing ship is chiefly the sailor's ship—the cargo tank, the sailing vessel—not the passenger ship. So much the better for the passenger! But since the misery of expectation can be understood by any landsman, since we may all realize without much difficulty the sickness of the heart that

follows the ever deferred hope of the ship bearing those we love being heard of and arriving in safety, let us extend our sympathy to those who do suffer in this direction, and understand that no ship, however small, can be "posted" but that hearts are made to ache, homes are darkened, and sorrow and poverty are unleashed for their bitter work.

CHAPTER XI.

AN AUSTRALIAN'S YARN.

Among the passengers was an Australian gentleman, and one evening, the steamer then sweeping over a burnished surface of sea and our talk going to calms in days before steam, he related the following extraordinary story:—

"It is difficult," said he, "for passengers by sea to realize in these days what a dead calm is. There is no stagnation unless there is some failure in the engine-room, and that, happily, is seldom the case—in ocean passenger steamships, I mean; for as to the metal tramps Britain has been covering the sea with of late years, they are hardly to be thought of when you talk of ships and the safety ships offer. As Dr. Johnson once said, whilst breathing out his hatred of the Americans, 'Sir, when we talk of men we don't think of monkeys!' Still there are many sailing ships afloat, and such passengers as embark in them must necessarily now and again get a taste of a dead calm; but few landsmen, I think, will be obtaining experiences of this kind much

later on. I do not believe myself that the sailing ship is doomed. On the contrary, you have overbuilt so greatly in steamers, the loss has been so heavy in steam shipping, and the cost of maintenance when put side by side with freights is so out of proportion with all reasonable commercial views, that a reaction in favour of the sailing ship is quite possible. A return to tacks and sheets would, I think, be good for trade and for safety; it would increase the merchant's and owner's profits, and prolong the mariner's life.* For only consider the red-hot rush that is now going on, the blinded madness of competition, the hurry pregnant with deadly penalties! The other day I read a letter, begging some dock authorities to erect a weighing machine for public use. There was no time, the writer said, to weigh the provisions flung aboard for the officers and sailors, and hence owners stood to be cheated in quantities. A vessel just arrived must be despatched afresh within forty-eight hours, with the result that there was no leisure for more than pitchforking the cargo into the hold, and dismissing the wretched, listed hulk, with her jerry plates and feeble engines and drunken, foreign, under-manned crew, with compasses all wrong, steering gear full of menace, cargo waiting for the first bit of seaway to shift, and captain feeling like an executioner going to his death along with those he had been hired to drown; dismissing her, I say, with the devil's benediction on her, to some handy port in the bottom of the Bay of Biscay.

"No! slow-going canvas would correct many abuses, extinguish scores of men who now call themselves shipowners or managing owners, but who are much more

* I repeat this gentleman's story, but I do not necessarily share his opinions.

fitted to serve as drapers' or grocers' assistants, put money into the pockets of the reputable owners, and end the sorry and dishonouring speculating notions which, at the cost of inland ignoramuses, have been filling the docks and rivers with steamers of barbarous construction, as worthless as earning powers as they are as fabrics. We may come back to the sailing vessel, as I say, and I hope, indeed, we shall, in the interest of the whole of the maritime calling. But the days of sailing craft as passenger vessels are I think numbered. The emigrant having to pay but little for his voyage may for some considerable time yet continue to enjoy the noisome twilight of the 'tween decks of the 'magnificent A 1 iron clipper;' the health seeker will also often choose sail in preference to steam for the promise the square-rigger offers him of lingering long amid those salt winds in whose breath he hopes to find life and health. But the 'general passenger,' speaking of him or her as one does of the 'general public,' is sure to go on adding to the popularity of the ocean steam liner. We want to get to our port quickly, we suffer from sea-sickness, and look with abhorrence upon the ocean wave. A heavy rolling bout, through which we are carried at the rate of three hundred miles in twenty-four hours, ceases to be the sickening tumblefication which the most seasoned amongst us would find it in a full-rigged ship, with her courses hauled up, her fore-and-aft canvas in, her light sails furled, wallowing and heavily dipping upon a swell coming in burnished folds out of a sky of sapphire which the eye explores in vain for the smallest hint of wind.

"I was making the outward voyage to Australia some years ago now in a very pretty little ship that might have passed for one of the Aberdeen clippers of the old White Star line, with her bravery of green

paint, white poop-rails, elliptical stern, and other graces of a time that is past. We had made a good run from the English Channel, snored down the Bay of Biscay as they used to say, carried topgallant stunsails through the Horse latitudes, and swept in comet fashion into the North-East Trades, catching them in a squall of thunder and lightning, and then carrying them in half a gale of wind, till as we drew closer to the Equatorial parallels they fined down into the familiar steady blowing, the bright clouds sweeping overhead, and sky and sea a glorious blue. Well, all this was very good indeed. We talked of making Sydney Heads in seventy days, and any man would have conceived such a hope justifiable who had marked the splendid sailing qualities of the little ship and her capacity of making the most of whatever wind blew. I have seen the log hove-to eight and a half knots when her yards have been almost fore-and-aft, and the weather sides of the royals and topgallant sails aback with the wind-jamming of the helm. To be sure the water was smooth, but you know, to get anything like such sailing out of a structure you must have beautiful moulding, lovely lines, an eel-like slipperiness right along the whole length of her.

"We lost the Trade wind somewhere about four degrees north of the Equator. When I went below at midnight it was blowing a nice air; the black water was slipping by full of lovely phosphoric light; the breeze, cooled by the dew that lay like ice in the star-shine all about the decks, deliciously fanned the face and kept the cabin and berths tolerably cool, puffing out as it did from the foot of the windsails, and softly breathing through the open scuttles. But when I went on deck again at seven o'clock in the morning for the bath I was accustomed to take under the pump in the head, I found the ship lying

motionless in the heart of the very deadest calm I suppose that was ever seen or heard of in the middle of the great ocean. There was not a stir of swell, not the faintest lifting of a liquid fold to cradle the ship by so much as an inch of rocking either way. Nothing moved aloft. It was like lying high up a river or in a dock. The light sails hung from the yards without the least perceptible swaying of their cloths, and the masthead vane was stirless. There was a wonderful hush, too, that—broad as the daylight was, and the sun flaming up right dead ahead of us, as though the ship found a magnet in the glorious luminary—subdued the heart with an emotion of awe, such as might seem possible to a man only when the mystery of night had gathered round, and shrouded sea and ship in its mystical vagueness. There seemed a kind of steam rising up right away around the horizon, mere blue haze, of course, but, by rendering the sea line indistinguishable, by merging it, so to speak, into the sky, it communicated a character of astounding vastness to the sloping of the heavens from the zenith down to where the azure penetrated the mist, and came sifting and spreading, as it might seem, through and over the surface we rested upon, to the sides of our motionless ship. I noticed more than one of the sailors pausing in the act of clearing up the decks after washing down, to stare about, chiefly aloft, sometimes into the far distance, with a kind of wonder, followed by much thoughtful, deliberate gnawing upon the concealed quid, and a long, doubtful smearing of the stained lips with the back of a hand like a doormat. I made my way into the bows, and got on to the grating under the head-board, where the pump was, and I tell you it was startling to look through and behold unexpectedly the marvellously beau-

tiful and exquisite duplication of the ship in the cerulean mirror on which she rested. Had she been embedded in a huge sheet of looking-glass the mirroring could not have been more perfect. My own face stared up, sunburnt, at me through the grating, like a twin brother ogling me two fathoms under water. You scarcely thought of the real ship in looking upon this inverted counterpart, the white figure head, the bowsprit and jibbooms, the jibs melting in whiteness down into the sapphire faintness where the images died out, all touched with a kind of irridescence that gave a subtle softness, and even a sort of vague glory to the reflection, which yet left its life-like perfections untouched.

"It was with the soaring of the sun that the sense came to a man of the meaning of this dead calm. It was more like the gushing and raining of white fire than the familiar shining of the orb when the sea gave back his light in a surface of brassy brightness, full of needles of rays. Transparent as the atmosphere was you were sensible of a thickness and weight in it which made breathing a sort of yawning. It was an open-mouthed struggle with the lungs to respire, and it was a sight to see passengers and seamen gaping as if with wonderment as they looked about them, though it was nothing but the sheer labour of drawing in the breath. The pitch was soft as melted glue in the seams. If you touched anything of metal, a brass rail, a pin, the wire over a skylight, a blister rose upon your hand, and for two or three days afterwards you felt the pain, till the skin peeled off and the place healed. Men, the soles of whose feet were toughened into cowhide by use, danced away in agony for their shoes if they ventured to put a bare foot down upon the blazing deck. For my part, I could think of nothing but spontaneous ignition. I had

heard one of the mates say that there was a quantity of fireworks stowed away among the cargo, and I remember thinking to myself that if a few hours of such sunshine as this did not scatter ship, passengers, and crew abroad amid a scurry of rockets and catherine wheels, it would have to be because the powder wasn't of a catching kind. There was no use in grumbling. In fact, the temperature made one too languid for what sailors call growling. We passengers turned in dismay from any kind of food, and I never thought Jack's lot a harder one than when, at noon, looking forward, I spied an ordinary seaman leave the galley for the forecastle with a gallon or so of boiling pea-soup, the steam of which rose up past his sweltering face into the brassy dazzle overhead.

All that day the ship lay in a trance. Nothing moved but the sun, and the shadows which crawled along our decks and upon the sails. In the morning I had noticed an empty bottle in the water abreast of the gangway, and when I looked over the side at sundown that bottle was in the same place, aye, gentlemen, as if it had been anchored and we moored head and stern. When the sun went behind the sea the sky was in flames, as if a city as big as London were on fire there. The heavens rapidly filled with stars, and a night wonderful for beauty and awful for stillness came on. 'Twas stifling below, and sleep was impossible. I do not know how the ladies fared. The men amongst us went to bed in lounging chairs on deck under the awning which the captain allowed to remain spread all night. I heard some one speaking to the man at the wheel—the mockery, though, of a helmsman in such a calm!—about a shark close over the quarter. I went to look, and saw the beast outlined in phosphoric fire, stealthily swimming forward. The creature swam round and

round the ship half a score of times, till, upon my word, it made me feel as if it were some hideous sea-witch completing the spell that was to hold us bound and slowly rotting upon that stagnant, silent sea.

"Four days passed in this breathless manner—four such days and nights as I hope never to experience again. It was the night of the fourth day. We were sick of looking for the wind; our eyes, strained in search of the faintest blur in any quarter upon that brilliant and shining plain of quicksilver, were sore with the fruitless search, and with the light that came off the water fiercer, I think, than the effulgence into which the masts lifted their heights. Four bells had been struck—ten o'clock. The second mate, whose watch it was, stood aft whistling faint and low for a draught of air. Forward some figures on the forecastle blotted out the stars under the hauled-up course as they paced with naked feet to and fro upon the dew-cooled deck.

"I was leaning upon the rail, smoking a cigar, looking into the mighty distant hush, made so puzzling by the mirroring of the stars going up to the sea line, and blending in white flakes to as far as the eye seemed able to penetrate with the constellations and starry dust of the firmament, that it seemed to me as if I were the spectator of some unfamiliar universe; when all on a sudden the ship trembled so violently that you heard the rattling of crockery in the cabins, and the clanking of the links of chain sheets. I instantly thought of the fireworks, and made up my mind to find myself in a breath borne sky-high. There was a pell-mell tumble on deck of all who happened to be below.

"'What was that?'

"'What has happened?'

"'Has anything struck us?'

"'Has the ship touched the ground?'

"A dozen such exclamations were abruptly silenced by a similar thrill, this time more violent. It was, indeed, as though the keel of the ship was grounding over some hard substance; yet that was impossible, for she was motionless, and there was not a stir in the atmosphere. A minute after there was a dull moan as of thunder miles distant. This mysterious sound raised the utmost consternation among us, for I tell you such had been the character of the calm of the last four days that it had come to act upon our superstitious feelings, and we all seemed to forebode something unearthly. The half-stifled thunderous note was repeated, and then there leapt out of the sea, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile from us, a mass of red fire that flashed and vanished, blinding the sight as vivid lightning does. Though I could not see for some moments I could hear, and I was greatly startled by a furious sound of hissing as though there was a small tempest raving close to the ship. Where the flame had leapt there was to be seen a large circumference of heaped-up water, white as milk with boiling, and a vapour going up from it, looking yellowish as it floated past the stars.

"'A submarine earthquake!' exclaimed the captain, in a cheerful, encouraging voice; 'nothing to cause the least anxiety, ladies.'

"As he said this the boiling mass of water flattened to the black level, and then seethed out altogether, leaving the surface pure. After a little a strange smell of sulphur gathered about the vessel, and, looking over the side, we noticed a quantity of floating stuff that I heard somebody say was lava.

"'But Lord ha' mercy, see here! see here!' yelled the fellow who was standing at the wheel.

"We all rushed to look, and within a stone's throw of our taffrail, there lay upon the water a huge black shape, like the reflection of a thundercloud.

"'By heaven!' exclaimed the captain, after taking a long look, 'it must be a dead whale!—some fish as big as a whale—killed by the explosion!'

"The light was faint, plentiful as the stars were, and it was difficult to make out more than the vast mass of shadow the thing made close under our counter. One stared, hoping to see it vanish, for it was only the captain's notion that it was the carcass of a whale killed by the fire, or by the electric hurling up from under the sea. It was not until the dawn broke, however, that it was possible to get a complete idea of what lay close to the ship, though all night long the feeling of this giant corpse, pressing its mountain of corruptible matter into the very shadow the ship made as she lay motionless, rendered the passage of the hours slow and extremely uncomfortable; and even the chief mate, the mildest-mannered sailor I ever knew, let fly an execration or two when, after looking at the lumpish heap of blackness astern, he sent his eyes round the jet-like circle and found every tip of radiance in it tremorless.

"Now, when the dawn came, what we saw hanging in the same spot where it had arisen, was the body of a great whale, 'fin-out,' as the whalers say, with its belly rent in the strangest manner, as though fifteen feet of him had been clumsily gashed. It wouldn't make a pretty picture to describe the sight. You can realize what mutilation means when the carcass is half the size of the ship it floats alongside of. There were three or four sharks at work upon it, plunging their frightful teeth into the mass, and worrying the water with their draggings and tearings into little circles of foam. The

hot sun coming up—hot do I call him? roasting, I should say, with quick putrefying powers in every hour of his broiling light—made the dead whale a thing to be got away from as fast as possible. Indeed, it was a shocking sight for the ladies to see, and disgusting enough for most of us men, though I'll own to a sort of fascination in the spectacle of the sharks gorging themselves, and driving their shovel noses in their fiendish way into their hideous feast.

"What was to be done? We might be becalmed for another week—ay, for another fortnight. Long ere that the heat would have risen out of that carcass a pestiferous atmosphere for all hands to droop and die in. We waited till noon; there was not a hint of air, so when the men had had their dinner the order was given for the boats to be got over and tow the whale away. But whether the overpowering heat rendered the boats' crews, many of whom were foreigners of poor stamina, incapable of putting much weight into their oars, whether the extraordinary sluggishness of the deep backed by the deadness of the mass, hindered their progress, it was certain that though three boats had got hold of the tow rope, yet after straining for two hours the only result was to carry the whale not five ships' length distant from us. In fact, we were no better off, but rather worse, for now the horrible thing lay plain if you looked towards the sea that way, whereas before it was almost out of sight unless you went aft expressly to see it. The crew said they were dead beaten, and the captain hoping for a catspaw had the boats up to the davits again. But all that night it was our pleasure to have that hill of blubber and flesh close aboard of us, and see the sharks flashing up the fire as they feasted. Happily, just before sunrise a light air came along dead ahead. The captain's business

was to get clear of the whale, and, without troubling himself about his course, he made a fair wind of the draught, running everything aloft that would catch it. The catspaw—it was little more—drove us two miles away from the whale, then failed, and for three days following the calm remained the same extraordinary stagnation. Then, one night, a small breeze sprung up from the westward, and next morning found the clipper sweeping through a stormy sea under single-reefed topsails."

CHAPTER XII.

'LONGSHORE TWISTERS.

"ONE gets some strange stories from sailors," exclaimed a gentleman, when the Australian passenger had ended his tale; and the glance the speaker shot around made you suspect he had not yet fully swallowed what he had heard. "I spent a fortnight at an English seaside town last summer, and the boatmen told me some very queer yarns—tough yarns, gentlemen."

"'Longshore yarns," said the Australian passenger. "They top all marine lies. How did they run, sir?"

"Well, I must tell you I heard them in a public-house. I stepped in for a glass of ale. There were five men in the room, and they were arguing on politics in deep sea tones, and many clinching nods, with a perfect storm of such sentences as 'And so I tell ye, mate,' 'Don't you go and make no mistake about that,' 'T'ain't no use calling him a man, for he ain't,' and so forth. They gave up after a while, and wandered into marine

channels, which presently brought them to the sea, owing to one of them making some reference to a man who had been brought ashore from a brig in consequence of having badly injured himself by falling from aloft. One word led to another, and presently the brig and the injured man carried us to the subject of sharks. One fellow said, 'That there notion of sailors reckoning that, because a shark follows a ship steadily for days, something desperate's going to happen, is more to be found in books, I think, than in ships. There's no end of loose fancies being chucked into fo'c's'les by people; but I dun'no that you ever hear of nautical men picking them up. I remember, when I was first going to sea, being aboard a brig bound to one of the West Indie Islands. A shark came under our counter in the tropics, and stayed there for sixteen days. It became a kind of habit in us men, as we went aft to relieve the wheel, to look over the starn for that shark; yet I don't remember any uneasiness. There was no sickness—nothing went wrong; but recollecting that the crew never got talking about any fancies connected with that shark, I don't suppose anything could have happened to us which we should have dreamt of putting down to his hanging in our wake for all them days.'

"'Oh, but there are superstitions about sharks,' said I. 'Sailors are not the ignorant set of men the public on shore have been made to believe, but some superstitions they have certainly, and one unquestionably is that a shark steadfastly following a ship for several days bodes ill-luck.'

"'Well,' he said, 'I know that that's the idea, but I've followed the sea, man and boy, for eight-and-twenty years, and never remember a shipmate showing any uneasiness because a shark hung in our wake.'

"'I've known good luck to be brought by a shark,' said one of the men. 'When I was an ordinary seaman, lying in a harbour down Porto Rica way, the chief mate, who was a bully, told me one day I shouldn't go ashore. Out of spite, and being a passionate rascal, hated by all hands, he hung about to see that I didn't give him the slip. I was determined to go ashore, and so threw off my shoes and jacket, and took a header off the fo's'c'le rail, and struck out. The mate outs with a revolver and lets fly at me. There was a moon, and the water was full of fire, and he could see me plain enough. Finding he'd missed, and that I was still swimming, he whips off half his clothes, as I was afterwards told, and jumps in after me. I allow his notion was to have drowned me could he have come up with me. Some of the hands looked on, and they told me what happened. I hadn't heard the mate jump, and didn't therefore know he was following of me; but I thought he might lower a boat, and I swam hard to get ashore first, resolving to desert that vessel if so be I could get foot upon dry land. Well, it wasn't two minutes after the mate had made his plunge when I heard a frightful scream behind me. The sound of it nearly froze my blood, and I went on sawing through it, arm over arm, till the water was in a blaze all about me. I got ashore, and stood looking towards the vessel, and seeing that no chase was being made, I went leisurely into the town. Next morning a man asked me if I was the young chap that had jumped overboard to swim ashore. I said, "Yes." "Well then," says he, "the mate followed ye, and saved your life." "How d'ye mean?" says I. "Why," he says, "a minute after you were in the water a shark rose to you. The men on the forecastle saw his figure plain. Before they could sing out the mate jumped. The splash

he made seemed to frighten the fish for a second, for the fiery line of him vanished. The mate swam right for him; some of your chaps roared out. I suppose the poor devil thought they was deriding of him. The next thing seen was his body hove up to the waist out of water, and a lashing of white shining water about him; then he just gave one shriek." "Ha!" said I, shudderin', "I heard that shriek." So you see, sir,' said the speaker, addressing me, 'that sharks can bring luck to a vessel.'

"'But what sort of luck does your story illustrate?' said I, staring at him.

"'Why,' he answered, 'wasn't it a first-class stroke of luck for a crew to get rid of a bullyin' mate, without having to lift a finger against him? If it hadn't been for that there shark I should have lost my chest and clothes, for I didn't mean to return, and, of course, they would have been sacrificed. 'Stead of which, when I heard that the mate was dead I returned to the vessel, and the captain was too glad to get me again to say a word about what I'd done.'

"'That don't equal your shark story, Joe,' said another of the men; 'Bill's is neat, but it ain't got the gaudiness that yours has.'

"'What's the yarn?' I asked.

"'Well,' said the man called Joe, putting down his pipe, 'it happened in this way. It's twenty year since. Ay, twenty year and a matter of three months since. I was aboard a little ship bound from Hull to Serry Leone. We got into roasting weather, and the ship took fire. We did all we knew to put the fire out, but the cargo was coal, and twenty-four hours after we'd smelt the fire an explosion of gas blew up the deck, abreast of the gangway, and killed two men. This made an open-

ing too big to smother. The fire and smoke rolled up, and as the ship was doomed, we turned to and got the boats over. The captain and six men went in one boat; the chief mate and six men in another. I was with the mate, and we lost sight of the captain's boat that night. I think the nearest point of the African coast was about one hundred miles off, but the mate shook his head when we asked him about the land there. He said if we got ashore, one of two things was bound to happen. Either we should be stripped by the natives, perhaps killed or carried into captivity, or we should die of hunger and thirst. Our only chance, he says, was to head the boat for some African port he named (I can't recall it offhand), and this we agreed to, always keeping a bright look-out for ships. Our stock of water and provisions was small. It was broiling work. For two days we had a light breeze that forced us to ratch. It then came on very quiet weather, with baffling airs, and sometimes calms, so dead that you'd look for dying and decaying fish on the surface of the stuff that was like oil. This went on; we scarcely made any progress; and what with the wet of the dew and the chill of it at night, and the glaring of the sun by day coming off the water with the sting of a furnace in its bite, our sufferings became dreadful.

"'It was one morning after we had been seven or eight days adrift in this fashion. Twenty-four hours before, we had finished the last drop of our fresh water, and it was now three days since anything solid had been swallowed by us. It was another dead calm, and when the sun rose I stood up with my arm around the mast to support myself, and took a look round. The sun made it all white dazzle out in the east, and I brought my eyes away from that quarter with the tears tricklin'

down my cheeks. As I slowly stared round into the west, I saw something moving, not more than half a mile off. It looked to me to be a spar, about fifteen or twenty foot long, and I knew it was moving by observing the ripples which broke around it and the shadow it made upon the water. I called the mate's attention to it. He was so ill that he scarcely had the heart to lift his head, but the sight of that there spar moving along, as it seemed, all by itself, put a kind of life into him. Indeed, it was an exciting thing to watch. The wrinkles breaking from it proved that it wasn't a current that was making it go. It was coming our way, but as it would pass ahead we made shift to chuck an oar over. It was about a cable's distance from us when it came to a dead stand. Our boat had a little way upon her, and, as she approached, the mate, who had crawled into the bows, cried out in a faint voice, "Gracious thunder; here's a sight!" What d'ye think it was? Well, I'll tell ye. It was an old spar of the length I have named, made fast to a great shark. You could see the big fish sunk to about twice the depth of his dorsal fin below the surface. He seemed tired of dragging this here coach, and was taking a rest. I couldn't explain to you how the towing gear was made fast to him. I think I heard the mate say that there was a sort of grummet or rope-collar over his head, secured by a chain through his mouth, and that he towed the spar by lines made fast to this collar. We all stood looking a moment, for the shark, that seemed as big as a grampus, was plain enough past the spar, when a man, named Harry Kemp, cried out, "It 'ud be a blooming good idea to make him tow us. No more calms to bother us then, and he ought to drag us in sight of something anyhow." No sooner said than done! The boat's painter was whipped

round the spar and secured to where its guys were hitched. But only just in time, for we were scarcely fast when old sharkee floats up to the surface, bringing his fin clear of the water. Then with a fierce sweep of his tail he shoots ahead, dragging the spar and our boat after him. Perhaps the extray weight put him into a passion, or may be he didn't find the spar so hard to tow now that it was kept end on by our boat's steering of it; but be this as it may, the shark went through it in fine style, heading a straight course. It was like a screw tug snorting ahead of a train of barges. Our spirits revived with the motion. All day long he towed us, sometimes slackening down, at other times falling mad, and sweating through it like a comet. We had a compass in the boat, and the mate said that his heading varied from between south and west-nor'-west. Anyways, two hours afore sundown that same evening we sighted a sail right over sharkee's head. There was then a light air, and she was standing about nor'-east. The shark bowled us along as though he guessed his towing job would be over if he could bring us to the vessel. And,' said the man, speaking with emphasis, 'I'm blessed if we didn't think he meant to tow us alongside, for he steered as true as a hair for the ship until she was within a quarter of a mile, when he suddenly grew perverse, put his helm up, and wanted to drag us due east. But we cut the painter, and let him go. The ship backed her foretopsail and picked us up. I reckon they looked upon our boat as bewitched, for they had seen her coming along without oars or sail, and the shark never showing himself, and nothing being visible but the spar in front of our boat, kept them puzzling till they couldn't have been more alarmed if we had been a boat-load of hobgoblins.'

"'A curious yarn that, sir,' said one of the men to me.

"'Very,' said I.

"'The sea is full of wonders,' said the man.

"'It is,' I exclaimed.

"'I was one day out a-fishing,' he said, 'in about three fathom of water. It was a cold October day, the water very quiet. There was codlins, whitings, poutings, and the like of such fish, to catch in plenty, and I rowed out to see if I could airn a shillin'. Well, when I came to the place where I reckoned the fish was, I threw in my oars, picked up the boat's anchor, and chucked it overboard. Guess my surprise and annoyance when I found that some one had been and gone and cut the cable close to where it was made fast in the boat. It was the doing of some boys, I suppose; but, anyways, the anchor took the cable, and away went the whole consarn. It was a new rope, and I had no notion of losing it, and my little anchor as well; so I took a fishing line, put some extra weights upon it, and secured the other end to a little cork fender, with which I buoyed the spot, and then rowed home again for the loan of a creep. A creep, I may tell ye, is a contrivance for sweeping the bottom of the water with, to bring up anything ye may have lost. Well, I got the loan of one, and called to Jimmy Dadds, a chap of about eighteen years old, to come out and give me a hand, promising him half a pint. We rowed out, came to the place, and he began to row quietly, whilst I chucked the creep over. It hadn't been down two minutes when it came across something that felt soft. It wasn't to be pulled up easy. The hold of it anchored the boat. "What the blazes have we hooked here!" says I to Jimmy, feeling whatever it was wobbling, as it might be, upon the creep, and yet refusing to come up. "Come and len's a hand."

He got up, laid hold of the line, and hauled with me. What was coming we couldn't imagine. The feel, I tell ye, was quite sing'lar. It wasn't like a piece of wreck; it wasn't like a fish; it wasn't like being foul of a rock. There was a kind of swaying and softness about it, as if the object was alive, and was holding on to prevent being drawed up. "Haul!" says I. We bent our backs, and started the object out of its moorings below; and what d'ye think came up? Why, sir, there popped half out of water the beautifullest female as ever ye set eyes on! She looked right at us, and I never see such a smile as she had. She seemed to be covered with jewels, and her black hair was all wreathed about with seaweed. She had one arm raised out of water, and this was stretched out to us as if she entreated us to leave her alone. Jim, who was the most ignorant fool of a lad that ever I met, at sight of her gives a screech and tumbles right back'ards in the bottom of the boat. His falling threw the line out of my hand. The woman disappeared, and when I hauled up the creep for her again the irons came up naked. I own I was a bit scared myself, but not so alarmed but that I was anxious to go on creeping for her again. But Jimmy refused to have anything more to do with it. He said no; he'd come out to sweep for an anchor, he didn't want no dealings with apparitions. As to the half-pint, I might drink it myself. What he required was to be put ashore. However, I wasn't going to leave without my anchor, so I gets the boat into position again, and at the first throw of the creep I brings up the cable. I then rowed Jimmy ashore, where, meeting a couple of men, I tells them of the apparition that came up, and invites them to come out to try if another sight could be got of her. Well, they consented, but though I could have swore we swept

over the place twenty times we never hooked on to the object. It got talked about, and others tried, but to no purpose. Jimmy's yarn made people believe it was a mermaid. Fact is, he was in such a state of funk, he saw a good deal more than I did, or that any other man that hadn't lost his head would. He said she motioned with her hand, as though to drive us away, and that her eyes sparkled. I couldn't deny myself that she looked as if her dress was coated with jewels and pearls, at least as much of her dress as I could see; and there's no denying, also, that her hair was a beautiful black, and as she rose to the surface, looked to be floating and filling under the seaweed that hung about her head so gracefully you might ha' swore it was her sweetheart's doing.'

"'But it wasn't a mermaid, of course,' said I.

"'Well, I dunno I'm sure,' he answered.

"'The newspapers said,' exclaimed another man, 'that it must have been a ship's figure head.'

"'Ay,' said the other, with some little show of resentment, as though refuting an argument that annoyed him. 'It's all very fine saying it *might* have been a figure head. But why was it never come across again? How was it that me and the score of others who tried for it never could hook it? I'm not going for to say that she was alive, for I ain't such a fool as Jimmy; but neither are ye going to get me to believe that the smiling, beautiful figure as rose up glittering with jewels was a carvin' out of wood, and so I tells ye. What it was I dunno, but I do know what it *warn't!*' and, looking very gravely at me, he filled his pipe afresh, and sat smoking thoughtfully.*

* I have since come across the following in the "Annual Register," 1809:—

"EXTRAORDINARY PHENOMENON.—At Sandside, in the parish of Reay,

"'I'll give ye a stranger story than that,' said a shaggy, ringletted man, who might have passed for Robinson Crusoe in undress. 'I had sold a boat for forty-five pound; the money was paid me down in notes—call it four o'clock when this here money was paid. It was too late to put it in the bank, so when I gets home I turns to and rolls the notes up in a piece of thick brown paper, and seals up the ends. I made a parcel like a couple o' ounces o' baccy rolled up tight, and I puts the package into the side pocket of my jacket for safety. Well, that night it came on to blow hard. Me and my brother lived in a little cottage just at the back of Fish-alley. He was one of the lifeboat's crew. At about two o'clock in the mornin', when it was snowin' and blowin' at the top of its fury, there came a call to my brother, and out he ran, with half his clothes in his hands, putting of 'em on as he went. I had some nets to overhaul in the morning, and when I got up, it being dark, I felt for my coat to put on, and found it a-missing. I struck a light, and saw that Bill—that was my brother—had, I suppose, in the hurry, taken my coat by mistake. Well, you may reckon, this gave me a start, for I naturally thought of my forty-five pound. I went down, dropping all thoughts of my nets, to hear if there

in the county of Caithness, there was seen about two months ago an animal supposed to be a mermaid. The head and the chest, being all that was visible, exactly resembled those of a full-grown young woman. The mammæ were perfectly formed; the arms longer than in the human body, and the eyes somewhat smaller. When the waves dashed the hair, which was of a sea-green shade, over the face, the hands were immediately employed to replace it. The skin was of a pink colour. Though observed by several persons within the distance of twenty yards for about an hour and a half, it discovered no symptoms of alarm. It was seen by four or five individuals of unquestionable veracity at the same time." A fuller account of this "phenomenon" is printed in the same issue of this "Register," pp. 393-395.

was any news of the lifeboat. Well, there was no news, and nothing was heard of her till nine o'clock that night, when she arrived with the survivors of the crew of a Norvegian brig, and one of her own crew drownded. And who was he? Why, Bill, and no other. He'd been knocked overboard by a sea, and instantly lost sight of. With him had gone my forty-five pound, and, spite of Bill and me havin' bin' very good friends, I felt as if I should never be able to forgive him for taking my coat instead of his'n. Well, I went to the expense of gettin' some small bills printed, offering a reward for the discovery of his body, though a chap named Tommy Hall says to me that I was only a-spendin' of my money to no purpose, since whoever found the body was pretty sure to overhaul it first and take the notes. Time passed, and I made up my mind that the money was gone for good and all, and resolved to give up troubling myself about it. One day, about three months a'rterwards, Tommy Hall comes up to me and says, "I was down at old Glass's last night, and young Joe Miller stated in my hearing that there was a piece in a London paper speaking of a cod that had been brought ashore at Plymouth which, when opened, was found with a roll o' Bank o' England notes in his guts. I wonder," says Tommy, "if them there notes could be yourn?" I got the paper, read the piece, and took it round to old Mr. Sheepskin, the lawyer. He says to me, "Have ye got the numbers of them notes?" I says, "No." "Who paid 'em ye?" says he. I up and told him. "See if he's got 'em," says he. I found he had, and I comes back with 'em to Mr. Sheepskin, and left the job in his hands. Well, just as I expected, they turned out to be my notes; but old Sheepskin took care that I shouldn't get their value, for he made out such a bill for time,

travellin' expenses, hagencies, and the likes of such things as them, that all the money I got was twenty pound. However, I was glad enough to get that, for I had reckoned the whole bloomin' sum lost.'

"As this ended the yarn, I rose to go. One of the men, who had sat silent, came out with me into the street. I said to him, as we stood a moment at the door, 'Curious stories, these?'

"He expectorated some tobacco juice, wiped his lips upon the back of his hand, and said hoarsely, 'Yes; but they might be made much curiouser, considerin' they're all lies.'"

CHAPTER XIII.

TO TABLE BAY.

THE South-east Trades are a delightful wind when first "taken;" but as the ever-rotating propeller drives us deeper and deeper into the heart of them, whilst the easterly trending of the coast of Africa opens a wide ocean under our fore-foot, they freshen into a strong breeze, which, on the bridge, seems to come with the weight of half a gale, owing to the velocity with which we were urged against the dead-on-end wind. The only unpleasant bit of this enchanting and sunny voyage is to be found a few degrees north of the Equator, where you feel the proximity of a burning coast in an atmosphere that is at once glowing and steamy. It is here, as the ship's doctor told me, where the consumptive patient suffers most.*

* It is also not uncommon for persons who have suffered from

But three hundred and twenty miles a day speedily leave the brassy glare and the humid draughts of this ocean-region far astern. It is the memory of those few parallels, though, which makes one's entrance into the south-east wind a sort of festival to spirit and body. The air grows cool, albeit the sun stands right overhead, and at noon you look in vain underfoot for your shadow; the sea is of a deep and most glorious blue, with long billows flowing in lines of sapphire and snow, brightened here and there into a dull gold by the sun. I remember standing on the bridge one forenoon and looking for a long while at the beautiful picture offered by the ship. She was what sailors term "light" and a trifle down by the stern, so that forward her stem showed as high as a cliff with the tall top-gallant forecastle and the spring of the deck due largely to her trim. The fore-mast, with its heavy goose-necked derricks, the lofty forecastle front, the lighthouse towers with their polished brass tops shining like suns to the noontide effulgence, the jib and stay-sail stowed in netting, and resembling in shape a couple of gigantic bananas swaying on the stays, the row of capstan bars ranged along the rail at the break of the forecastle, combined to give all this forward part of the ship a heavy and massive look. A boy turned a grindstone while the carpenter sharpened some tool of his upon it. On the port side you saw carcases of meat, showing red through the large round window in the butcher's shop; gathered together under the forecastle deck for the comfort of the shade there stood blocks of grimy firemen and trimmers intermixed with a waiter or two, a few sailors, and some colonial Dutchmen in queer caps and coarse dress, smoking strangely-

African fever to exhibit in this part of the sea symptoms of the old complaint.

shaped pipes. There were children playing on the deck between where I stood and the forecastle; women sat on chairs and benches nursing babies and watching the sports of the little ones; on either hand you saw a range of coops so filled with fowls and geese that one laughed out of sheer pity to see the densely-packed creatures billing one another in the full conviction that they were pluming themselves. The frame of this picture was formed by the bulwarks rising to the forecastle and thence going in high iron rails to the forecastle head. But the charm I found in the scene lay in the lifting and falling of the huge bows. With every dive of them into the steep violet hollows there was thrown out a boiling mist of spray rich with fragments of rainbow. The shadows of the people swung at their feet. The glories kindled by the perpendicular sun in brass-work and polished woods and in the radiant glass of skylights flashed and faded with each sweeping heave. One moment the outline forwards, rendered ponderous by the scores of details between the rails, rose buoyant as a balloon to the lifting of the blue Atlantic surge; *then* it was all sky beyond, and the sea-line looked to come on either hand to the ship's side thirty feet below her forecastle deck; but in an instant the hollow received the crushing and sheering stem, when down would drop the metal bows until the sinuous horizon stood to the height of a man above the forecastle head, and the deck there seemed to stoop to the volume of the blue billow with the flatness of a spoon. It was a fine sight this rising and plunging, with the alternations of light and shadow, and the splendour of the sun-bright dazzle of white waters flung in enormous polished curves from the vessel's sides. It is impossible to express the sense of freedom, the joyous feeling of quickened vitality you got

from this spectacle of defiant and rending and pitching fabric, and the wild beauty of the processions of azure ridges offering a sort of hurdles to the speeding vessel, and the magnitude of the distant scene of weltering waters sloping their furrows to a sky of delicate blue, made piebald by masses of cloud flying upwards out of the ocean, and soaring over our mastheads, and vanishing in the tail of our streaming wake.

One sees many things to look at and to find amusement in on board an ocean passenger boat. The show of human nature is not, indeed, great; perfectly natural people are not very common either on sea or on shore, and voyages are scarcely long enough nowadays to suffer the mind to lapse into ingenuousness. Yet an attentive observer will often see human nature breaking out here and there, chiefly in unexpected places. One thing I noticed: the pride of fathers and husbands in the children and wives they left behind them. A man would come up to you and break off in his chat to put his hand in his pocket and produce a little packet of photographs—his wife and his children, and particularly the baby—and though there might be nothing remarkable to admire in the little fat object, the sight of whose portrait put a kind of wistfulness into the father's eyes as he glanced at it a moment before returning it to his pocket, yet the tenderness of the thing touched and pleased you. It would take a long time to bring a man into this state of communicativeness on shore; but the feeling of distance and of isolation is strong at sea, and thoughts of home and the dear ones there will thaw the iciest reserve, and put a gentleness into the roughest and raise a spirit of kindliness and goodwill fore and aft.

Very often things which are utterly trivial of themselves fix the attention at sea and prove a lively

recollection long after memory has abandoned points which at the time seemed striking and singular. I will give an illustration of my meaning. Captain Travers had, as I have elsewhere said, a little hand-organ that manufactured music by rolling in or out a length of paper with the raised notes of the tunes upon it. He was one day playing this contrivance in the chart-house, and almost opposite the door there stood an old quartermaster stitching canvas on to a piece of rope to serve as a gangway line or something of that kind. The sailor's face was the sourest I ever saw; it was full of twists and knobs, and his eyes were but a trifle larger than pins' heads—mere natural punctures for the admission of light. You could not watch his acid countenance without suspecting the grumbling character of his thoughts. He gave me the impression of being one of those sailors who go on sulkily with their work whilst they mentally and with much acerbity criticize the captain and the passengers. "Oh yes," I can imagine the old fellow saying, "I don't doubt it is very comfortable to be lying along upon a cheer readin' excitin' books, sleepin' whenever ye has a mind to it, watchin' of the sailors setting of the awning, and making a shadow for ye to lie cool in. But who's *us*, I should like to know, that the job should be ourn for making people we never seed afore and will never see agin comfortable and easy?" And so he goes on growling, but all the while working the harder; for the greater the grumbler, says the old sea adage, the better the sailor. This old quartermaster went on stubbornly with his work, listening to the music Captain Travers was making, and sneering at it in his fashion by an enforced sourness of face—and by taking apparently a profounder interest in the fit of the canvas he was adapting to the

rope. But it would not do. Some melody—"Tom Bowling" or "Sally in our Alley"—struck upon memory, and excited a pleasurable emotion; the corners of his mouth straightened; a dim sort of smile came sifting, so to speak, out through his wrinkles and warts; recollections, perhaps, of some cosy bar in times long distant when life was young, when his pocket was lined with dollars, when drink was good, and his voice a hurricane note arose in him. He smiled, and his smile possibly will recur to me when I shall in vain endeavour to recall things very much more important than an elderly quartermaster's slow and acidulated grin.

It was a touch, indeed, that would have delighted Dana. There is a passage in that writer in which much such another old sailor as this sour-faced quartermaster is represented as leaning over the flying-jibboom and muttering to himself, as he gazes aloft at the sails rendered stirless by the wind and marble-like by the moonlight, "How quietly they do their work!"

Let landsmen think as they will—there is still a vein of sentiment left in the most dogged and growling of mariners. Captain Travers, manœuvring with his queer little organ in the chart-house, unconsciously succeeded in raising emotions which he would probably have been the last to suspect as possible in the mind of the puckered old salt, who with palm and needle stood a fathom or two away sullenly stitching canvas to a rope. Would that Richard Dana had been alive to observe that sailor's face, and describe it!

Such are the trivialities which at sea furnish memories for shore-going leisure. And yet another reflection—due to our skirting the burning African soil in a passage rendered sweet withal and delicious to every sense and full of subtle powers for stirring the weakest vitality into

full vigour and large capacity for enjoyment by the pure and blowing wind. I mean this: that it was impossible to look over the side, to feel the glorious breeze full upon the cheek and whistling through the teeth, to understand that the roasting African coast was, comparatively speaking, but a few leagues distant, without thinking of those British sailors whose stern duty it is to watch over the interests of our country in the torrid climes between Saldanha Bay and Sierra Leone, and even further. On board an ocean steamer, always making a breeze of wind by her rapid progress, or stemming the invigorating gushings of the South-east Trades, with awnings protecting her decks fore and aft, with ports wide open, with many tons of ice in her hold, and with a bar at which all day long you may get cool drinks passing under fifty names, it is not very easy to realize the lot of naval officers and men anchored within an easy run of the spot through which your steamer is sweeping, or creeping in gunboats or small corvettes from one fiery coast village to another. At Cape Town I met a lieutenant of a well-known vessel that had been stationed for many months upon the barbarous African coast. His little ship had just arrived at Simon's Bay, and this officer, a fine, hearty, genial fellow, had come to the old Cape Settlement for a day or two to enjoy himself and forget, if he could, life on shipboard on the West African Station. He was burnt up to the complexion of a coloured man, and told me some desperate stories of the sick list and of fever, of fifteen grains of quinine for a dose, of horrible morbid thoughts causing a man as he lies in his coffin of a cabin, reeking with cockroaches, to cast his languid gaze about in search of any implement to end his life. I remember when we met that it was a beautiful moonlight night; the air was deliciously cool;

a light breeze coming in soft gusts down Table Mountain shook many sweet odours from trees of the drooping moon-lily and from the red petals of the oleander, silvered by the moon gleams. The lieutenant stood awhile in a kind of rapture, with his hands clasped. The posture and the emotion were absolutely unaffected. He breathed deep, and exclaimed, "I have not set my foot off the ship for seven months. You may conceive what this scene means to me." He behaved like a man in a dream. Before parting we entered a little drawing-room, where there was a piano. He turned to me with a smile, and said, "Time was when I could play this thing. I wonder if West Africa has left any music in me!" He sat down and strummed over a tune or two, and you saw how the very sound of the melodies affected him, and how they carried him many thousands of miles away home to where his wife and his little children were. To watch him getting up and looking at the piano was like seeing a shipwrecked stranded man welcoming some sign of life and of help washing up to him. It gave me a better idea of the true signification of banishment to the West African Coast than I could have gathered from a whole volume of description. "He also serves who only stands and waits," says Milton, in one of the sublimest of his sonnets; and it is not necessary that there should be war to test the courage, the dutifulness, and wonderful capacity of self-sacrifice of the Queen's sailor.*

But this by the way. Meanwhile the *Tartar*, snort-

* And not only the sailor. An officer in the Royal Engineers to whom I was speaking about the West Coast, said, "Yes; but what do you think! When we were in Bechuanaland, the general ordered us to be clothed in corduroy! Corduroy, with the heat under canvas at 110 degrees! Such corduroy as an English labourer goes to work in on a frosty morning!"

ing like a racehorse over the hurdles of billows which the glad and sunny south-east wind heaves foaming against her course, offers other pictures of sea-life outside the charms of the freedom you must go to old ocean to taste and enjoy. The smoking-room of large passenger steamers usually submits some amusing if not very edifying studies. In times not long since past the smoking-room of the sailing liner such as left the Mersey or the East India Docks for Australia or India was commonly to be found, if the vessel had a poop, just under the break of it. The amount of comfort you found there depended a good deal on the weather. The cabins projecting on either hand the cuddy entrance formed a sort of hollow, and one could smoke a pipe in the shelter when the ship was hove to and a gale of wind blowing without great risk of the bowl being emptied of its glowing contents a moment or two after the tobacco had been lighted. But the nook was not altogether luxurious. I remember once running before a gale of wind round the Horn to the eastwards. Mountainous seas followed the ship, and swelled their roaring heights to flush with the topgallant rail as they rushed ahead of the flying vessel. Half a dozen first-class passengers had assembled for a smoke under the break of the poop, when on a sudden, through the clumsy steering of the helmsman, a high green sea tumbled over the rail just before the main rigging, filled the waist, and floated the smokers off their feet. They knocked together like so many empty bottles; pipes were dropped in order that life might be saved; and, whilst one man was washed head-over-heels down the booby-hatch, some were picked up stranded under the long boat and others were found helplessly jammed under the port poop ladder. The modern traveller, accustomed to the luxurious fittings of

a house on deck, specially provided for him when he feels the need of a pipe or a cigar, might hardly relish the old order of things; and yet there were moments in the smoking-room of the *Tartar* when I would recur not without a slight emotion of wistfulness to the breeziness of the ancient quarterdeck, with all its risks of green seas and roof-like angles.

It was a room usually very crowded, and all day long you would find parties of men in it playing "Nap." "Nap" to these gentlemen dominated the whole business of the voyage. Glorious effects of sunset, the grace and splendour of bounding seas, the tranquility of the tropical night so studded with stars that overhead it was like looking at a sheet of silver cloth twinkling to the slow hovering of its folds, the solemn music of breaking waters, the wild and fascinating evolutions of the sea bird, were all subordinated to "Nap." "Nap" triumphed over considerations of weakened lungs, of rheumatic limbs, of dyspeptic troubles, and of general debility. With streaming foreheads, roasted countenances, and panting bosoms, with pipes and cigars in their mouths, the players would sit on, happen what might and be the scene without what it would, their outlines slowly waning in the ever thickening atmosphere. There would come times, however, when the heat was so great that men would be glad to lose their money in order to step out and breathe. One afternoon—it was a very hot day—I looked into the smoking-room, and found two Scotchmen playing at chess; they wore coats and had their hats on. I sat a little while watching their motionless posture: they were absolutely stirless, save for now and again the thoughtful lifting of the hand of the one who had to play and the dropping of it again to his side. The intentness of their speculative stare

caused a slight protrusion of their eyeballs, and I confess they formed a curious and almost exciting study. The heat drove me away; when I returned, I found they had removed their hats, but were still motionlessly watching the chessboard, and it was evident that the player whose hand I had watched rising or falling had not yet attempted a move. Again I was driven away and again returned, this time half an hour later, when I found the two Scotchmen seated without their coats, waistcoats, and boots; they glistened with heat drops; nevertheless they sat stirlessly watching the chessboard, and, incredible as it may seem, yet, when I asked a gentleman, who with a patience that rivalled that of the players, was watching the game, whose move it was, he indicated the Scotchman, whose epileptic arm still assured me that an hour and a half was not time enough to enable him to consider what he should do! Such a game as this would fill up three or four round voyages. So much reflection as these Scotchmen exhibited should, I think, become in a short time a sort of physical suffering in them, and when I recall the equatorial heat, the adjacency of the galley with its little furnace and its range of frothing saucepans, the strong vibrations of the engines almost directly beneath, and the waftings of warm oil that occasionally drifted through a window facing the funnel, I am lost in wonder that these two persons should ever have survived to finish the game.

But a last day comes at sea as it comes ashore. We had swept through the brisk pouring of the southerly wind, for hour after hour had crushed with indomitable stem through the melting heights of the long ocean surge, and in smoother waters and athwart a light westerly wind were fast closing the land. It was easy to know, without guessing the position of the ship, that

Table Bay was not far off. The demeanour of the passengers sufficiently attested this. At least you would have found the truth distinctly recorded in the looks and behaviour of those who were returning to their families. Those families lived mainly, no doubt, far inland, in all sorts of places—Pretoria, Kimberley, Bloemfontein, King William's Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, and who can tell where else?—prodigious journeys of themselves, as a home-dweller might guess when he should hear of the leagues of coasting past L'Agulhas, or the weary railway journey of fifteen miles an hour, with two or three hundred miles afterwards of coaches, bullock waggons, and mule trains. But the mere sense of approaching port gave a definiteness to home yearnings such as had not been very noticeable during the voyage. What was the health of the wife? How were the little ones? What had happened since the last news from home had been received? These things, and how much else? remained to be discovered; and the captain, coming into the saloon and telling the passengers that he hoped to make Robben Island Light by midnight, gave such a start to the general restlessness that many who had been driven from the deck by the dirty lukewarm drizzle of the evening went with a sort of feverishness to the companion steps, and could not be persuaded to remain dry until the light was actually reported.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, when breakfasting once with Boswell, tried to thunder his companion down for suggesting that a man, separated from his family, might be rendered uneasy by wondering how they were doing, whether they were sick or well. The Doctor would not have this. A man had no right to be uneasy. Sir, he ought to consider. He knew he was well, and it was unphilosophical to conceive that those who were distant

were not well too. No, sir! Supposing a man well, would it not be unreasonable for his absent family to make themselves miserable by fearing that he might be ill?* But, for all that, Boswell was right, and the fears and the anxieties of the passengers of every ship that enters port disprove the old lexicographer's notion as to the right of a man to feel uneasy about loved ones to whom he is returning, and of whom he has not had news for weeks.

Robben Island Light hove into view earlier than the skipper had expected, and when the report came that it was to be seen glimmering down on the port bow, there was a rush on deck. The drizzle had settled away, but the night was still dark. After you have been at sea for many days without sighting land, the gleam of a lighthouse, of any shore signal, momentarily affects you as nothing else does that offers itself on the horizon. Darkness shrouds the scene in mystery; the sky is starless, and the eye instantly catches the tiny distant yellow flame that marks the presence of land. The sea heaves around with the powerful lifting swell of the unfathomed deep as though you were in the middle of the Pacific Ocean; yet the light assures you that the coast is close aboard. Daylight might reveal the outline of mountains towering far inland, the ivory-like splendour of white sand, the commotion of billows savagely frothing about the stubborn sides of black and fang-like rocks; but all is hidden save that little light. Not far beyond

* I wrote this from memory. On turning to Boswell, I find this: "I expressed to him a weakness of mind which I could not help; an uneasy apprehension that my wife and children, who were at a great distance from me, might, perhaps, be ill. 'Sir,' said he, 'consider how foolish you would think it in *them* to be apprehensive that *you* are ill.' This sudden turn relieved me for the moment; but I afterwards perceived it to be an ingenious fallacy."

it, you may know, there lies a populous town, where the electric light streams sun-like into the still waters of a bay, where the hillsides re-echo the busy hum of life in streets crowded with vehicles, in pavements filled with people, in shops full of the radiance of gaslight and oil. But the night lies black and heavy without; the engines champ and throb in their iron dungeon; the night wind is full of complaining noises as it sweeps through the rigging: the washing of the bow wave is still as it has been for days and days, and there is nothing in all this universe of gloom to tell you that the last evening has come, that the passage to the Cape of Good Hope is very nearly over, save that tiny light burning steadfastly far away down there over the port bow.

But it is an assurance strong enough; the very waiters drop their work to run into the alley-way as it is called and look at the light. In a few minutes, another gleam to starboard is descried, and the news swiftly passes round that it is the mail boat homeward bound. We are doing thirteen knots, and she is probably approaching at the same speed, and at the rate of twenty-six nautical miles an hour we are not long in coming abreast of each other. There is nothing to be seen of her but a stream of illuminated ports a mile or so distant in the darkness; but when she is fairly abeam of us we break into fireworks; tell her who we are with signals of brilliant colours; and once again our steamer is made to stand out against the ebony gloom in lines of glittering blue and red. The passing vessel responds with a display of a like kind, but by the time the last portfire has gushed its cataract of blazing spangles over her side she is on our quarter, her cabin lights wink and vanish, and she disappears as utterly as if she had foundered headlong.

But the look-out on deck is cheerless; the thin drizzle has set in again; the engines have been slowed, and we are not likely to enter Table Bay much before two o'clock in the morning. There is nothing to sit up for; nothing to see on such a night as this when we enter the bay; so at eight bells I go below to bed, and on waking up I find I have been disturbed by the sudden death-like stillness of the engines, by the motionlessness of the huge fabric upon a lake-like sheet of water, and by the plunge of the anchor striking ground for the first time after many days of continuous steaming. Half asleep, I throw a languid glance through the open scuttle and perceive the bright electric lights of the docks, casting shafts of silver into the dark surface beneath; but there is little besides to see, so to bed again until dawn, when I hope to get my first view of Table Bay by the light of the early sun.

CHAPTER XIV.

TABLE BAY.

There is grandeur in the beauty of Table Bay as you survey it from the spot where the ocean steamers drop anchor before entering the docks. The notion amongst Europeans of South African scenery is that of leagues of roasting white sands, with an inland flatness of parched and stunted vegetation. This delusion is largely owing to the accounts sailors have given of their shipwreck on the African coast. In all the old stories it is always mile upon mile of sand, with nothing in view but

the distant figures of a horde of Arabs or nude barbarians, restlessly awaiting an opportunity to pounce down upon poor Jack, strip him of his boots and jacket, and carry him off secured to the tail of a camel into captivity to some village of small huts, filled with sable ladies and pickanninies, ordinarily about five hundred miles inland, and, therefore, a very long and thirsty walk for the castaway mariner. The truth is, the coast of Africa, certainly in its southern parts, abounds in many beautiful bays, enriched with romantic scenery, and ennobled by towering mountains, near or distant.

Table Bay is an example. You get something of the impression of wonder that is produced by Sydney Harbour when you enter this bay for the first time. The mountains lifting their eternal heads, crowned with snow-white vapour, give a majesty to the perspective. The water of the bay is of an exquisitely soft blue. At the base of that grand and picturesque height named the Lion's Head you see the houses standing like toys white as peeled almonds, whilst the surf gleams in masses upon the beach, beautified with the greenery of gardens just beyond. The mountain sides seem draped in velvets of green and brown. It is the purity and transparency of the atmosphere that imparts this surprising softness of tone. You specially note the charming effect in the view of the Hottentots Holland Mountains, which, even in their dim distance, gather a sort of richness to their azure tint and fascinate the eye with a cloud-like tenderness, bland as the shining fulness of swelling summer vapour slowly sailing above the horizon on the wind, but with a sky-line too cleanly cut and too deliberately fantastic in its irregularity to be mistaken for anything but the high sierra of a range of lofty mountains.

The many colours of that morning supplied me with

just such a picture of Cape Town as one would most like to see. From the flat summit of Table Mountain, where the white vapour was beginning to boil against the unspeakable blue of the sky beyond, the gaze descended into the dark violet shadows of solemn ravines, into the twilight of deep scars, passed the metallic lustre of groups of silver trees, the vivid green of tracts of vine bushes, whilst now and again a large cloud-shadow swept a sort of faint purple light over the sun-touched patches of red soil, of granite-like prominences, and of abrupt falls of rock bronzed in their massive fronts as though the hand of old Time had coated them with iron —I say, the gaze descending those heights of nearly four thousand feet, came to a most lovely grouping of houses, low-roofed, windows shining, with much shrubbery between, and verandahs veiling the white fronts with a delicate dusk. In the foreground were the docks, with the heavy spars of a man-of-war or two giving a density to the complex tracery of the lighter masts and rigging of merchant vessels and steamers. A red powder-flag, pulling at the masthead of a small vessel anchored close in, sufficed to give a sharp distinctness to the houses on a line with it on the hillside. It was a contrast, indeed, to lend to distance the precision you obtain by looking through a lens; and all other colours I noticed produced the same effect, such as a red funnel, the American stars and stripes, the English ensign floating at a peak.

And still a wonderful complexity of tints took the eye as it swept round the margin of the bay past Woodstock, with its foreground of pleasure-boats and quaintly imagined bathing-machines, and the dingy red of the soil on the mountains, and the windmill bold against the airy azure of the far inland heights. The water always came in a brilliant hue to the throbbings of its own surf

upon the shore of dazzling sand, of shining houses, of little spaces of soft green, and the mighty flanking of the cathedral mountains.

But the magic that works so much of beauty here can neither be expressed nor suggested. I speak of the enchantment of the radiant atmosphere. Nothing is lost in this marvellous transparency, and you think of the towns and plains at a dream-like distance away inland that would be visible to you from the commanding altitude of Table Mountain if those stately peaks lying fifty miles distant did not barricade the regions beyond them with their mystical altitudes.

In the days preceding the Suez Canal, and when sailing ships were making the voyage to Australia and India, Table Bay was a much more familiar sight to Englishmen than it now is. Vessels full of passengers were repeatedly calling here for one reason or another, and the impressions people received they carried away and talked about at home and elsewhere. It is seldom nowadays that you see the big passenger sailing ship in the bay. Reports come from L'Agulhas of many kinds of craft passing that stormy point; but the times are gone when the cold blue waters of this splendid haven reflected the chequered sides and the burnished masts of tall ships which had dropped anchor here as a place of call and a break in the tediousness of four or five months of passage to Australian coasts or to the hot regions of the north of the Indian Ocean. Hence, often as the scene has been described, I may yet, perhaps, with a reasonable amount of conscience, venture to offer a sketch of Table Bay and of its town and neighbourhood as they now are.

I must confess that all the while that I remained in Cape Town I was never weary of admiring the scenery

of its noble tract of waters, of the bright mountain-shadowed bays, and the granite giants which looked down upon the town. The dock officials very kindly placed a small steamer at my disposal for a trip, and, in company with several gentlemen, I made one of the most delightful little voyages that can be imagined. To as far as Camps Bay, we opened a hundred beauties. The mountains for ever accompanied us. Go where we would their dominating presence was a mighty shadow in the heavens. To me, Table Mountain looked like the ruins of some immense cathedral raised by hands in days when there were Titans in the land. From the centre of the bay it resembles the remains of a vast wall, and round the slope of the Lion's Head you seem to find the theory of giants having constructed this amazing edifice confirmed by vast blocks of rock and granite which might well pass for the headstones and churchyard memorials of the burial-ground of a vanished colossal race. It is here especially that you observe a hundred startling phantasies in the shapes and postures of these stones, prone or upright: enormous owls, parrots' heads on human figures, cowled monks of huge stature, prodigious women in drapery, carved, as one might suppose, to perfection. You would say, indeed, that the remains of giants reposed upon this rocky, massive slope, that their sportive fancies were perpetuated in these wild and grotesque shapes, just as traces of their serious and splendid genius remained in the spacious front of a mountain, cathedral-like in its immensity, and to this day reverberating the old giant organ notes of praise in the low melodious thunder of every blast sweeping down the sheer abrupt from the white cloud resting upon its brow.

It is the cloud, the "table-cloth," as it is called, that gives to Table Mountain and to the mighty sentinels

that stand on either hand of it, much of the wonder and not a little even of the magnificence you find in them. It was my fortune to witness many exhibitions of this majestic and lovely phenomenon. The sky-line of the towering height lies with extraordinary sharpness against the liquid sapphire of the heavens beyond; when suddenly, almost in the space of a breath, you might say, a wreath or two of mist, shining with the iridescence of a cobweb to the sun, are seen crawling along the brow, as though steam from some natural spring were breaking out up there. Till now there is not a breath of air. The flowers hang sick in the heat; you see the distant horizon working sinuously in the blue roasting haze like the outline of a serpent, or of the sea-line when a heavy swell is running; the soft white mist on the mountain-top gathers in volume; presently the low moaning of wind is heard, the vapour begins to boil like the foot of a cataract, and the mist, resembling lace in its festooning, or clouds of spray swept by a gale from the heads of high seas, drops a little way below the mountain's edge. As the cloud grows the marvel and beauty of the sight increase. It is a sort of Niagara Falls of vapour, but a miracle is wrought in the evanishment of the steam-white cloud when it reaches depths of varying measurement below the brow of the mountain. The perpetual boiling of this white smother, the ceaseless torrent-like cascading of it down the precipitous side, the blue of the sky beyond it, and the stormy yelling of the wind in the scores of ravines and chasms through which it rushes screaming and shouting in its flight from this pouring radiant cloud, combine to produce an impression which a man may travel many a long year to gain the like of.

I once stood looking at this mountain on a clear

moonlight night, when the whole face of the prodigious rock was obscured by vapour. The moon rode high, and shone full upon the picture with the gem-like, piercing brilliance you get in orbs in the southern hemisphere. The wind thundered down the mountain, and the raging of the trees all about filled the ear with a sound of maddened surf. It was a contrast of utter mockery—these tempestuous ravings under the serene night sky, with its low-lying stars twinkling in blues and greens, and its central space of mist-like effulgence with the heavenly moon, queen of the lovely night, in the heart of it. Many dim veins of colour, reminding one of a lunar rainbow, shifted and worked in this vast vaporous, snowy veil. Now and again the fury of the wind would rend the cloud in places and leave visible a point, a fragment of outline, a sheer edge of the enfolded mountain, black as ebony in these chasms opening amidst the whiteness. Another time I stood at sundown watching the bronzing of this cloud by the brassy luminary sinking in a heaven of orange beyond the Lion's Head. It is, indeed, impossible to express all the effects of shadow and of lovely prismatic light that you get from the gathering of this vaporous falling and whirling cloth upon the flat heights of the famous eminence. It is the general magnification here that fixes the attention of one fresh to the scene. The mountains are giants, and in the distance you behold visionary outlines soaring Andean-like to the pale blue beyond, penetrating the clouds and rising seven thousand feet heavenwards. The breakers as they roll in to Camp's Bay and the rocky windings beyond have the true Pacific stature, and swell their glittering peaks green as bottle glass in correspondence with the enormous acclivities, at whose foot they roll their thunder and their foam.

Whilst taking that cruise about the bay which I have just now mentioned, I came across a ship that I would not very willingly have missed. She was an American whaler, and had been out for twenty-two months bagging whales in about latitude 42° South. She had eight hundred barrels of oil aboard, and was certainly one of the queerest and rustiest old hulls I ever had the fortune to encounter. I was told that whalers are rare birds in Table Bay nowadays, though in former times they were plentiful enough. I kept the steamer alongside of her for some time that I might inspect her. Her metal sheathing was green as grass, and you saw the barnacles upon it through the transparency a little way below to where the sheathing came. The large blocks employed in "cutting in" had scraped her sides clean all about her gangway, and grievously worn them. She appeared to have worked half the oakum out of her, and her seams were hollow. Her name was the *Sea Queen*, Joseph Thomson, master, and she hailed, as might easily have been conjectured, from New Bedford. Boats exhibiting every symptom of hard wear stood bottom up on chocks, or hung from massive wooden davits over the side. Dirt and grime lay thick on the scuttles. The name of Herman Melville rose to my tongue as I looked at her, and at her short topgallant masts and crowfoot rings over the topgallant rigging for the men to keep a look-out from. No one who had read "Omoo," or "The Whaler," or "Typee," and saw this ship, but must have thought of the brilliant Yankee sea-yarner. The *Sea Queen* was just such another old hooker as brought Melville away as a beach-comber from the Marquesas. As I stood looking at the row of heads over the rail I thought to myself, "Surely the right name for this craft must be the *Little Jule*, and if Mr. Jermin, the

chief mate, is aboard, I will ask him to show me that wonderful sextant with which at noon, when slightly the worse for rum, he would go hunting for the sun all over his grass-covered decks!"

There is a pleasure in the unexpected confrontment of the perfect realization of some visionary favourite in a work of fiction. I have met Bumble, and Noah Claypole, and I have shaken hands with Parson Adams and Dr. Primrose. Here now was the *Little Jule* lying in Table Bay under the name of the *Sea Queen*. She carried thirty of a crew; they all came to the rail to look at us, and I heartily wish some artist had been of our party to jot down with his pencil the delightful variety of countenance and of costume exhibited by that array of whalers. There were white men and black men, and men whose faces were all hair, and who looked like sailors striving to peer through a mat. There were Dutch faces and Yankee faces; faces which might have been carved out of a balk of timber, and faces of the hue of the ship's bread, which I suspect could have been found crawling about on the legs of innumerable weevils in the little barky's lazarette. There were four harpooners, and they came over the side and exhibited the brass muskets or guns with which nowadays they kill whales by firing explosives into them, though, of course, the old-fashioned harpoon is carried in plenty, and repeatedly used. Each tub of oil, they told me, contained three hundred and ten gallons, and as they had eight hundred such tubs filled up in their hold, and as, moreover, they had only been twenty-two months cruising out of the forty months' voyage their owners had limited them to, there was a good chance of every man's "lay" ending in a big pocketful of dollars. One might live a hundred years and yet never come across so quaint, old,

battered, and grimy a whaler as this *Sea Queen*, fresh as she was from nearly two years' washing about in search of prey south of the Cape of Good Hope.

The sight was one to stir the fancy, and I certainly found no great extravagance of imagination in the sudden arising in me of thoughts of the *Flying Dutchman*, out of that wallowing old whaler from which our little steamer was now speeding. If Table Bay and all about the Cape of Good Hope be not the right neighbourhood wherein to dream and think of the Phantom Ship, I know not what other parallels to choose. It was in the teeth of one of the wild north-westers you get in these seas that Skipper Vanderdecken swore his dreadful and lamentable oath not to give up trying to weather the stormy headland even though he should have to wait till the Day of Judgment came. Did the Dutchman, ere he hurled his fierce defiance to Heaven, ever bring up in Table Bay? No doubt he did. He was from Batavia, and there is yet living an ancient Hollander who, when a boy, remembered his great-grandfather telling how once Vanderdecken, when outward bound to Batavia, had called at Table Bay for fruit and tobacco. It was during his return voyage from Batavia, after his visit to Table Bay, that the skipper provoked the Divine wrath by his imprecations. The ancient Hollander's great-grandfather lived long after Vanderdecken had been sighted struggling to windward, and this it was that impressed upon the recollection of the Dutch grandsire the picture of the ship he had seen straining at her hemp cable a little to the westwards of where the breakwater now is.

The *Flying Dutchman* is described as having a very curious low-built bow, with a mass of timbers curving at the head to the immensely thick cutwater. Her bowsprit is steeved to an angle of forty-five degrees; at the

end of it is a round top, and standing perpendicularly up out of this top is a small mast with another top at the head of it big enough to admit of its occupation by two or three men. A heavy, very square yard hangs by lifts under the bowsprit, and on the little perpendicular mast she carries what may be called a spritsail yard, the foot of whose sail spreads on the yard beneath. She has topsail and topgallant yards, with large round tops at the head of her lower masts, and smaller tops, but of a like character, at her topmast's heads, instead of cross-trees. She has a very lofty stern, with a kind of castle at the after-end of the poop, where the taffrail should be; and it is here where Vanderdecken takes his stand, trumpet in hand, when a vessel heaves in sight, and he desires to speak her. Her mizzen-mast rakes aft, and carries a triangular sail set on a gaff, with another jib-headed sail that sets flying outside. The break of the poop comes to before the mainmast, so that that spar pierces the poop deck, whilst the athwartship-rail sets up, so to speak, on either hand the mainmast. The high bulwarks end abruptly just abaft the fore-rigging. She is pierced for eight guns, but it is not certainly known whether she still carries the quaint old pieces that grinned in her heyday through her ports. The ancient Dutchman affirmed that his great-grandfather used to say she was painted a pale yellow. Time, probably, has left to the struggling fabric but little of her old garnishings. There can be no doubt, however, that the above description is that of Vanderdecken's ship that sailed from Batavia for Holland in or about the year 1641 on a voyage, which, through the wickedness of her profane master, will never come to an end as long as old ocean continues to roll.*

* Marryat, in his "Phantom Ship," gives the following description

I made many inquiries whilst at Cape Town as to whether there were any traditions in the neighbourhood of Vanderdecken having been sighted, but nobody seemed to know much about him, and if it had not been for the old Dutchman I should not have been able to describe her. I have ascertained, however, that there is no foundation for the statement that Vanderdecken was fired upon by the Dutch whilst seeking to enter Table Bay during the winter season, a period of the year when no vessel was allowed to approach Cape Town. It is quite inconsistent with the old tradition to pretend that in consequence of being fired upon the skipper put to sea and was lost. A harsh judgment indeed that should compel the phantom of a ship whose only sin was that she foundered to go on sailing about for ever! It is well known that the sole reason Vanderdecken has for hailing a ship is that he may send a boat with letters for the home that he and his crew have not revisited for two centuries and a half. The superstition is that if a captain heaves his ship to to receive one of these messages from the Dutchman, he and his vessel are doomed. In this point lies the real pathos of the thing. Poor Vanderdecken and his bald-headed, blear-eyed, and tottering sailors are for ever yearning to communi-

of a vessel of the time of Vanderdecken: "There was a great spring in all her decks,—that is to say, she ran with a curve forward and aft. On her forecastle another small deck ran from the knight-heads, which was called the top-gallant forecastle. Her quarter-deck was broken with a poop which rose high out of the water. The bowsprit *staved* very much, and was to appearance almost as a fourth mast; the more so as she carried a square spritsail and sprit-topsail. On her quarter-deck and poop bulwarks were fixed in sockets implements of warfare now long in disuse, but what were then known by the names of cohorns and patteraroes; they turned round on a swivel, and were pointed by an iron handle fixed to the breech. The sail abaft the mizzen-mast (corresponding to the spanker or driver of the present day) was fixed upon a lateen yard."

cate with those homes which have long ago ceased to exist; but the mariner, knowing the penalty of accepting the mission, flies at the approach of the phantom ship, which, after a short chase, desolately shifts her helm and braces once again sharp up against the visionary gale that prohibits her from doubling the Cape.

Many years, I believe, have now elapsed since Vanderdecken was last sighted. One of the latest instances I can find is that of the man-of-war *Leven*, commanded by Captain W. F. W. Owen.* It was on April 6, 1823, when this vessel, being off Danger Point, bound to Simon's Bay, saw the *Barracouta*, another ship of war, two miles or thereabouts to leeward. This was considered extraordinary, as it was known on board the *Leven* that the other vessel's sailing orders must have

* Since this was written I find that the phantom ship was sighted by Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales, during their cruise in H.M.S. *Bacchante*. Their narrative runs thus:—"*July* 11 (1881). At four a.m. the *Flying Dutchman* crossed our bows. A strange red light, as of a phantom ship all aglow, in the midst of which light the masts, spars, and sails of a brig two hundred yards distant stood out in strong relief as she came up. The look-out man on the forecastle reported her as close on the port bow, where also the officer of the watch from the bridge clearly saw her, as did also the quarter-deck midshipman, who was sent forward at once to the forecastle; but on arriving there no vestige nor any sign whatever of any material ship was to be seen either near or right away to the horizon, the night being clear and the sea calm. Thirteen persons altogether saw her, but whether it was Van Diemen or the Flying Dutchman, or who else, must remain unknown. The *Tourmaline* and *Cleopatra*, who were sailing on our starboard bow, flashed to ask whether we had seen the strange red light. At 10.45 a.m. the ordinary seaman who had this morning reported the *Flying Dutchman* fell from the foretopmast cross-trees, and was smashed to atoms. At 4.15 p.m., after quarters, we hove to with the head-yards aback, and he was buried in the sea. He was a smart royal-yardman, and one of the most promising young hands in the ship, and every one feels quite sad at his loss. (At the next port we came to the admiral also was smitten down.)"

despatched her leagues away from the place in which she was now seen. Captain Owen bore down to speak, but the other put her helm up, though she was observed some time afterwards to lower a boat. Next day the *Leven* anchored in Simon's Bay. The *Barracouta* arrived a week later. On inspecting her log, it was seen that she was three hundred miles from the spot where it was believed she had been descried. Twice the *Leven* sighted the phantom ship. On the second occasion, the Dutchman lowered a boat; but Captain Owen, perfectly aware of the penalty that would attend his undertaking the delivery of a letter for Vanderdecken, packed on canvas and took to his heels as fast as his ship would carry him.

The authority for the following is R. Montgomery Martin, who published the statement in 1835.

"We had been in 'dirty weather,' as the sailors say, for several days, and to beguile the afternoon I commenced after-dinner narratives to the French officers and passengers (who were strangers to the Eastern seas) current about the *Flying Dutchman*. The wind, which had been freshening during the evening, now blew a stiff gale, and we proceeded on deck to see the crew make our bark all snug for the night. The clouds, dark and heavy, coursed with rapidity across the bright moon, whose lustre is so peculiar in the southern hemisphere, and we could see a distance of from eight to ten miles on the horizon. Suddenly, the second officer, a fine Marseilles sailor, who had been among the foremost in the cabin in laughing at, and ridiculing the story of the *Flying Dutchman*, ascended the weather-rigging, exclaiming, 'Voilà le volant Hollandais.' The captain sent for his night-glass, and soon observed, 'It is very strange, but there is a ship bearing down upon us with

all sail set, while we dare scarcely show a pocket-handkerchief to the breeze.' In a few minutes the stranger was visible to all on deck, her rig plainly discernible, and people on her poop; she seemed to near us with the rapidity of lightning, and apparently wished to pass under our quarter, for the purpose of speaking. The captain, a resolute Bordeaux mariner, said it was quite incomprehensible, and sent for the trumpet to hail or answer, when in an instant, and while we were all on the *qui vive*, the stranger totally disappeared, and was seen no more." *

Before closing this reference to the most fascinating legend old ocean has to offer, I desire to quote a curious passage printed in the first edition of the "Biographia Britannica." It runs thus: "When the said Sir Bernard Gascoign returned from his embassy into England he took shipping at Dunkirk; and one of the passengers who came over with him was Mrs. Aphra Behn, the ingenious poetess. It is asserted by the writer of her life that in the course of their voyage they all saw a surprising phenomenon, whether formed by any rising exhalation or descending vapours shaped by the wind and irradiated by refracting lights, is not explained; but it appeared through Sir Bernard's telescopes in a clear day at a great distance to be, or to resemble, a fine, gay, floating fabric, adorned with figures, festoons, etc. At first they suspected some art in his glasses, till at last, as it approached, they could see it plainly without them; and the relater is so particular in his description as to assert that it appeared to be a four-square floor of

* Marryat's version, I think, neutralizes much of the poetry of the beautiful and romantic legend by representing the expiation of the father through the fidelity of the son, and the consequent evanishment of the whole ghostly fabric.

various coloured marble; having rows of fluted and twisted pillars ascending, with Cupids on the tops, circled with vines and flowers, and streamers waving in the air. 'Tis added of this strange visionary, if not romantic or poetical pageant, that it floated almost near enough to them to step out upon it; as if it would invite them to a safer landing than they sought by sailing; or portended that the one should be as dangerous and deceitful as the other; for soon after the calm which ensued there arose such a violent storm that they were all shipwreckt, but happily in sight of the land: to which by timely assistance they all got safe." This happened in or about the year 1672. The circumstances of fluted pillars, Cupids, flowers, and the like do not, to be sure, accommodate themselves to the historic idea of old Vanderdecken's craft; yet when we know the belief was that no ship ever sighted the phantom ship without grievous disaster befalling her, it really looks as if the Dutch yarn were in the mind of the relater of Mrs. Aphra Behn's experience when it is stated that a violent storm followed the appearance of the ghostly object, and that the people who spied it were all of them shipwrecked. Unless, indeed, which is not at all probable, the story of this English Channel vision suggested the picturesque, immortal tale of the Amsterdam skipper and the curse that followed his impious defiance.

CHAPTER XV.

CAPE TOWN.

Sometimes whilst looking at Table Mountain I would amuse myself with thoughts of taking my stand upon the flat summit of that gigantic elevation and beholding thence in fancy the wondrous processions of ships which for many a long century now have made their way round the Cape of Storms into the mighty Indian Ocean, or which, after heading westwards, have "nightly stemmed" northwards towards the Pole. Imagination might run riot on that towering eminence with little risk of violating probability. Gazing northwards from the summit of Table Mountain, the eye beholds miles of the seaboard to islands on the parallel of Malmesbury. Southwards the view embraces the dim horizon—infinitely remote—marking the junction of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans with a faint shadowing of the land stretching into the veritable Cape of Good Hope itself. Whilst westwards heaves the great Atlantic deep, rolling a surface without break of rock or shore, until its surges wash the strand of the far-jutting South American continent. From many parts of the earth, and during many ages, ships of all kinds and descriptions have sailed within compass of the view that may be obtained from yonder mountain top. Could the phantoms be evoked, what legions of shadows would one behold! the little vessels of Henry of Portugal and of John II.; the high-pooped craft commanded by Bartholomew Dias and by Vasco de Gama;* the sturdier vessels of the

* De Gama doubled the Cape on the 22nd of November, 1497. Dias had preceded him by ten years.

Dutch and English East India Companies yet in their infancy. The head of the procession may be said to have started in the fifteenth century, and the long, serpentine coil is still in motion, but swelled to such proportions, formed of such ships, that it affects the mind with the power of a striking imagination to conceive of the thoughts that would inspire the early, hardy, and bold admirals in the thin, tossing, picturesque van of the mighty maritime concourse could they gaze upon the rear and behold the character of the fabrics which crowd it!

One well-acquainted with the history of shipbuilding could find no better vantage-ground for appreciation of the changes which have been wrought in four centuries than the table-land on top of the great mountain whose outline fills the gaze for leagues and leagues. Think of the little bark, with its round tops for the crossbow-men, its small brass pieces glittering in holes along the bulwarks, its quaintly cut flowing sails and antique bravery of pennons, breasting the seas off that dim Cape of Good Hope away down there, alongside the ocean mail steamer of four thousand tons! * In truth, a good deal of the charm of Cape Town and Table Bay lies in historic association, chiefly marine, and necessarily, therefore, of deepest interest to every true-born Englishman. The Dutch are not much loved by the colonials here; but all the same, if they are not a picturesque people they have a picturesque history, and not a little of the salt and genial romance of their annals enters into as much of the story of this Cape settlement as belongs to them. From old records you get a score of

* The expedition under Vasco de Gama is represented as having been formed of three vessels, one of 120 tons, another of 100 tons, and the third about 80 tons.

odd and striking things pertaining to the early settlement; such as the announcement of the birth of the first child at the Fort of Cape of Good Hope on June 6, 1652; of there being found on April 24, 1654, a dead orang-outang of the size of a calf, with long arms and legs, covered with hair, which was cooked and eaten by those who discovered it with great appetite and enjoyment; of the arrival of the first cargo of slaves from Guinea at the Cape on March 26, 1658; of an unsuccessful attempt in 1665 to capture an English man-of-war named the *King Charles* that had anchored in Table Bay, and so on.

I was much interested in a volume that was shown to me at the library. It contained a folded engraving representing a shipwreck, and the printed matter consisted of what resembled columns of a newspaper cut out and pasted on blank sheets. The volume is in old Dutch, and is as quaint an illustration of the simplicity of those times as it is possible to imagine. The preface roughly translated runs thus: "The picture (the writer is referring to the folded engraving), entitled the 'Hero Woltemade,' shows us the true image that was sculptured on the stern of the East India Company's ship named *De Held Woltemade* by order of the honourable directors of the East India Company, given in their Chamber at Amsterdam. The ship was finished on the 30th July of this year, 1775, by that very old master shipwright, Willem Teunisz Block, who (which is very remarkable and perhaps without example) has finished the one hundred and fiftieth ship for the service of the East India Company, three small vessels and two ship camels excepted. This ship has now been taken to Texel, and will sail for Batavia with the Kermis ships under the command of Jan Stil. On her stern is found

a history of the event which this picture represents engraved by the sculptor Hendrick van Velzen."

The story referred to in this preface, and of which it seems a pictorial illustration was carved on the stern of a Dutch East Indiaman, is told at great length and with every manifestation of earnest piety in the printed matter pasted in the book. Briefly, the yarn is this: In 1772 a Dutch East Indiaman, *De Jonge Thomas*, with three hundred people on board, lay in Table Bay. A storm of wind came on from the north-west, a heavy sea rolled in, the vessel parted and grounded close in shore. An old man, between sixty and seventy years of age, named Woltemade, formed one of a crowd of persons assembled on the beach. Seeing the situation of the sailors, he spurred his horse through the surf, shouting for two of the people to jump overboard and seize the horse's tail, so that he could tow them ashore. This was done, and several times the brave old fellow rode through the heavy breakers, bringing two persons ashore every journey. At last three men jumped overboard, and one catching hold of the horse's bridle dragged the poor brute's head under water and drowned it. The result was Woltemade and the three men perished.*

This record is one of many of a like nature entering into and creating the history of Table Bay, whilst crowd-

* Woltemade, says a contemporary account, was at this time the keeper of the beasts at the menagerie, near the garden. He had a son who was a corporal, and it was this son's horse that the old hero rode. A curious circumstance in connection with this wreck is, that in order to save the Company's property (as it came ashore), thirty men were ordered out in charge of a lieutenant; further, a gibbet was erected, and an edict issued to the effect that whoever approached the spot should be forthwith hanged! Woltemade happened to have borrowed his son's horse very early in the morning before the gibbet was erected. The date of this disaster as given in the English accounts is June 2, 1773.

ing the neighbourhood with legendary and historic association. Nor can I conceive of any sort of traditionary antecedent of which Cape Town, as it now exists, is calculated to neutralize the character and the colour. The town is strange to the European eye in many directions which have no special reference to its structures or the formation of its streets, albeit the few scores of early Dutch houses, with their stoeps, as they call the verandahs, their timber ceilings, numerous doors and windows fitted with small panes, create a certain distinctiveness of feature that takes accentuation from contrast with modern and handsome buildings.

A characteristic of Cape Town lies in the number of its hansom cabs, and another feature that speedily excites the attention is the extraordinary posture of laziness into which the drivers contrive, while their horses are standing still, to sink into. You notice the effect of the climate in a little thing of this kind, just as its drowsy influence is illustrated in the indolence of the dogs, which lie about sleeping one on top of another all day long; though to be sure, when the night comes, they atone for their reserve during the day by a widespread barking that is often hideous and distracting. Another feature, again, is the cock-crowing. I recollect one morning being awakened at about dawn. I went to the open window, and saw the green light in the east gradually brightening into a most delicate, beautiful blue through the lacework of greenery that festooned the verandah. I had not stood a moment or two when I was surprised by an extraordinary kind of groaning noise, that apparently rose from the whole surface of the land on which Cape Town stands. It sounded to me like a mourning chorus of fanatics—thousands of Malays perhaps smiting themselves and adoring Allah. It was not

until a cock in a neighbouring yard rung out its hoarse crow that I could determine the nature of the multitudinous groanings. But this adjacent cock having given me the key-note, I at once discovered that the sounds which had puzzled me were produced by hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of cocks crowing, for the most part, all at once. Again, I may regard the horns of the fish salesmen as another "special feature," to employ the language of trade. The town is filled with carts, which are used for hawking fish about, and the men who sell this fish announce their approach by blowing a kind of trumpet. Throughout the day the air is resonant with these detestable notes. The reader may conceive for himself the sort of pleasure he would derive from street boys passing his house every five minutes, from six in the morning till six at night, blowing incessantly, every mother's son of them, a trumpet that may be heard a mile off. This sort of noise the people of Cape Town endure apparently for no other reason than that their servants may know that some very tough and tasteless fish are coming their way in a black man's cart.* I was told that people soon get used to the noise, and do not heed it; but I doubt the correctness of this information, since many persons whom I spoke to on the

* The fish caught in the Bay are unquestionably very coarse, poor eating. There are several kinds; I tried them all, and found them good for nothing. Milton, in "Paradise Regained," speaks of—

"All fish from sea or shore,
Freshet or purling brook, for which was drained
Pontus and Lucrine Bay and *Afric coast*."

What Satan could find, of fish, on Afric coast to serve as a garnish for the

"Table richly spread in regal mode
With dishes piled,"

remains to be revealed.

subject complained of the blowing of the horns as an intolerable nuisance. As though these horns were not intolerable enough, the drivers and conductors of the trams are forced to blow whistles when in locomotion. It is difficult to hear one's self speak in the cars, and the drive is rendered in consequence insufferably disgusting. There are thousands of crickets, too, when the blaring of the coloured costermongers and the whistling on the trams have ceased, to start a new sort of music for the night. Their utterance is like the sharp, abrupt ringing of electric bells. Heard afar, their chimes are not without a kind of melodiousness. The silvery monotonous singing seems always in correspondence with the bright African moonshine, the brilliancy of the twinkling stars, the deep respiration of the soft hot breeze amidst boughs drooping with weight of foliage, or amidst flowers pearl-like in hue and glistening in gems with the dewdrops they offer to the moon.

Cape Town is charged with a cosmopolitanism of complexion; every shade is represented, from the ebony black of the negro, born leagues away upland behind those distant blue mountains there, to the white and sickly hue of the English girl languishing in a climate where the British rose may be sought for in vain. Of all the coloured folks the Malays are the oddest. These people are artisans; they also drive cabs, they sell fish, they wash linen, and so forth. They are all well to do, are aristocratic from their own standpoint, and are such a power in the place that the one policy practised towards them, I believe, whether from the governor's table or the magisterial bench, is that of conciliation. When I was in Cape Town some difficulty arose about a new burial-ground that had been assigned to these Malays, who are Mohammedans. They objected to the site, and affirmed

their intention of continuing to bury their dead in the old ground. A dangerous insurrection was threatened; the volunteers dressed and armed themselves, and the troops were called out. Every street corner had its little crowd of excited Malay men and women, dressed in bright colours, who gesticulated furiously and chattered with passionate rapidity about their grievance. Elderly European ladies wandered about calling upon friends or visiting hotels, alarming everybody with conjectures as to what the result must be. We were all to be murdered in our beds; we were all to be poisoned in our cups; we were all to be secretly stabbed with weapons coated with some deadly mixture as we passed through the streets; our houses were to be fired; we were all to be starved by reason of the Malays (who seem to have the chief victualling of the place in their hands amongst their other privileges and dignities) refusing to sell food and drink to us. Instead of looking for snakes under the bed, we searched for Malays coiled up in the darkness there; and if Malay laundrymen approached us with their little bills, we kept the table between them and us whilst we inquired into the motive of their visit. Eventually the Malays, on being harangued, consented to the interment of their dead in the new ground, the general terror evaporated, and we ate, drank, and went to bed once more without misgivings.

Yet one saw in this incident the sort of footing the Malays have in Cape Town. You would suppose that they were an infinitely more powerful element than the Dutch; though you hear a very great deal indeed about the latter, and next to nothing at all about the former unless there be a religious riot. They are certainly a curious kind of people. The women are habited in immense flowing dresses, and the men on

gala days distinctly top the Yankee notion of the "masher's" costume. I called upon Mr. Stuttaford, who has a very large drapery business, and asked him to tell me about these Malay costumes, and he showed me specimens of the goods he imports for these people; handkerchiefs of amber and red, green and yellow, bright magenta and blue, for the women's heads and shoulders; and bright green and blue stuffs for the dresses, which take about sixteen yards—a good flowing measure, Mr. Stuttaford told me, seeing that the dress is plain. The men, when dressed in their best, go habited in blue cloth trousers, pale yellow cassimere waistcoat, dark blue cloth coat, orange-coloured French merino neckerchiefs instead of a collar and tie, patent-leather boots, and a huge straw hat like a Chinaman's shield.

Of Cape Town itself I have no intention to say much. I intended that these chapters should be chiefly seafaring in their character, and that what I had to say about the ports I visited should refer to their maritime aspects; but before I touch upon the docks and the great improvement contemplated or, in a sense, already undertaken in respect of the constitution of Table Bay as a haven of refuge and of large accommodation in all modern appliances and conveniences, I must hope to find a little space to say a few words about the public and other buildings to which my attention was directed. The House of Assembly is a very fine structure indeed. It is held by many to be much too handsome and costly for the town; but it should prove a benignant influence, if the inhabitants would only choose to "live up to it;" in other words, to render their sanitary and other domestic surroundings in keeping with this very fine and richly-furnished edifice. The Public Library, too, is a repository to be greatly admired and warmly praised.

It contains nearly forty-two thousand volumes, and in the room dedicated to Sir George Grey's noble and magnificent gift a student might linger day after day for months without risk of satiation; for here I find a really superb collection of missals, Bibles, psalters, and literature of this kind of the sixteenth and of earlier centuries yet; unique manuscript transcriptions of Dante and Boccaccio, with Caxton's "Polychronicon," dated 1482; and 1623 and 1632 editions of Shakespeare, respectively printed by Isaac Jaggard and Ed. Blount, and by Thomas Cotes for Robert Allot. I confess I was delighted with this library, with the fine central reading-room, the handsome gallery around it, the tables loaded with periodicals, the side-rooms all very handsomely furnished, and the long shelves, soaring high, crowded with valuable, well-kept volumes. Another very fine building is that of the Standard Bank, in Adderley Street; but what I missed—what every man must miss who visits not only Cape Town, but every other place in the colony— is a good hotel.

Cape Town is about two centuries old,* and in all that time the very best hotel that the people have chosen to provide for the accommodation of visitors would disgrace the meanest, dirtiest, most insanitary village in England. A kind of Dutch phlegm, a profound indifference to progress beyond a certain point is undeniably a characteristic of Cape Town. There is an old painting in the Library—a ship stranded in Table Bay. Many figures on her forecastle are represented in postures of supplication and of anguish; meanwhile a crowd of Dutchmen assembled on the beach, dressed in a fashion which the portraits of Dr. Johnson have made familiar to us, stolidly smoke long clay pipes whilst they ap-

* Jan van Riebeck and his companions landed at the Cape in 1652.

parently talk about the shipwreck and what is to be done! There is no excitement; there is no movement. Those long clay pipes seem to have entered into the constitution and character of Cape Town, and they are yet phlegmatically smoked with the old Dutch stolidity you find in the painting in the face of a hundred matters crying trumpet-tongued for redress and reform.

I could mention a hotel that is considered, I was told, not only the best in Cape Town, but the best in the colony—a colony that includes such places as Kimberley, Port Elizabeth, Graham's Town, and King William's Town. I dare not trust myself to speak of the sanitary arrangements of this "best hotel." Such primitiveness as I encountered should shock, you would suppose, the soul of a Bushman. In other directions, illustrations of neglect and indifference abounded. If a window was broken, it was left to stand till somebody should take it into his head to fancy that a sheet of newspaper pasted over it would check the draught. The bedrooms were richly garnished with cobwebs, the beds were hard and bad, the table linen was dirty, and the two or three lads and the two or three chambermaids who came from making beds to waiting at table—whilst as attentive and good-natured as hard-driven people can possibly be—were utterly unequal to the demands made upon their services.*

Now, I should be glad to know what temptations a colony offers to travellers and invalids when the first experience of persons newly arrived must be one of great personal discomfort? No man, after enduring a week or two at a hotel in Cape Town, and learning that the

* As I was suffering much from rheumatism, I was naturally anxious that my bed-linen should be aired. On inquiring, I was answered, "Oh, we don't air linen here; we just chuck it upon a hedge, and when we think it's dry put it on the bed"

accommodation up-country was still worse, would dream of taking his wife or daughters into the interior. He would easily guess the sort of horrors he would pass through, and be perfectly satisfied with descriptions of the wonders and beauties of African scenery, whilst he made haste to secure cabins for himself and the ladies, and sail away for a land where hotels were good, and where the people had some cunning in sanitary science. In my humble judgment, the first step to be taken in the direction of courting travellers to South Africa is to supply them with some approach to the sort of accommodation they are used to in Europe. The steamship companies concerned in the interests of the Cape should see to this. There is abundance of room, at all events, in Cape Town for a single experiment; and not only abundance of room, but plenty of promise also. The hotel I stopped at was nearly always full. People from all parts of the country were incessantly arriving, for Cape Town is looked upon as a sort of metropolitan resort, and every steamer from England or coastwise brought fresh faces to the stoep and the *table d'hôte*. If such a poor, badly ordered house of entertainment as this finds such liberal patronage through the sheer necessities of travellers, what excellent speculative promise, then, would not a good hotel offer—a large, substantial, airy building, backed by the resources of the steam lines, and supplying you with every comfort of bath-room, lavatory, bedroom, table, and attendance? This is a first and essential step, and until it is taken I very much fear that the visits of that class of society whose presence creates a fashion, and whose movements induce prosperity, must be few and very far between indeed.*

* Howell, referring to the Dutch in his "Forreine Travell," has the following—not a little applicable to certain English, Irish, and others

I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Mr. Upington, the premier of the colony, and of listening to some very eloquently expressed views from him on the subject of Basutoland. I trust he will forgive me for saying that, for the sake of Cape Town, it would have afforded me more pleasure to have heard his deliberate opinion on the drainage of the place. It was not very agreeable to a stranger like myself during my short visit to hear that typhoid fever abounded in the suburbs and in certain quarters of the town. It was impossible to doubt the news—the nose everywhere found abundant evidence. I was being driven in a tram to Sea Point, when the driver stopped in the thick of an insufferable stench. I complained to the conductor about it; he said it could not be helped; it was more or less the same wherever the tram stopped; there was only one thing to enable a man to endure it, and that was *brandy!* Thus he spoke whilst the odour rolled thick to the nostrils, and the thermometer stood at 88 degrees in the shade. They say that the Malays and the Dutch are people of foul habits, and that it is impossible to keep streets and neighbourhoods sweet where these people dwell. But are there no laws to enforce cleanly observance? Is not sanitation at Cape Town insisted upon as an essential element of the public weal? Why should a fine town like this, rich in historic memory, dignified by some

at the Cape:—"In conversation they are but heavy, of a homely outside, and slow in action, which slownesse carrieth with it a notable perseverance, and this may bee imputed to the quality of that mould of earth, whereon they dwell, which may be said to bee a kind of standing poole of Ayre; And which is known to have such a force of assimilation, that when people of a more vivacious temper come to mingle with them at the second generation, they seeme to participate of the soyle and ayre, and degenerate into meere Hollanders; the like is found dayly in Horses and Dogs and all other animals."

stately buildings, beautiful in its surroundings with romantic scenery, with a kind of grandeur even, given to it by the towering and dominating adjacency of its mountains—why should such a town as this suffer from such conditions of uncleanliness, from such complications of evil odours, from such gutters of black and creeping filth as would be utterly impossible in the very poorest village you can point to at home? They have a noble Parliament House to legislate in, and there is no lack of shrewd, long-headed men capable of legislating correctly; why, then, not deal determinedly with this question of drainage, and with the aboriginal notions of the Malays and the bovine indifference of the Dutch, and so rescue a charming town, situated amidst lovely scenery, and standing radiant in a delightful climate, from the most disgraceful charge which, in these days of science, of soap, and of drainpipes, can be brought against a community? *

There is nothing worse to say of Cape Town than that its drainage is extraordinarily and disgracefully imperfect, and that its hotel accommodation should be accepted as a scandal by the people. For the rest, all is beauty, all is grandeur. The famous drive round the mountain side, called the Kloof Road, with its sheer descents of many hundred feet for the gaze to search, the bays mountain-flanked, their green hollows studded with white houses, with the giant comber of the South Atlantic breaking in lines of dazzling foam upon the

* A day or two before I sailed, I was driving with a gentleman in a suburb, when we came to a little stream in which some coloured women were washing. My companion informed me that the people living in the neighbourhood drank that water. "And yet," I exclaimed, "the laundry people are allowed to come and wash their dirty linen in it!" "Yes," he answered quietly, and with that we drove on.

rugged beach, leave such impressions upon the mind as years of travel amidst famous scenes could not efface. The strong south-easter sweeping down the mountain finds children of its own in the obedient trees leaning along its course. At intervals a kind of volcanic splendour is observed on the heights of the heaven-seeking eminences by the burning of whole acres of the pine tree; the night is illuminated by the incandescence, the stars are obscured by the masses of smoke settling in a dense fog about the Blaawberg Mountains, and you respire an atmosphere charged with a resinous aroma and thick with light-grey ash. All about Wynberg, High Constantia, and Claremont is pure fairyland; houses of graceful form shine amidst vegetation of tropical luxuriance; the white-faced old Dutch farmhouse stands, as it has stood for years, with draped windows, silent amidst the stillness of high trees, to which the shadow of the looming mountain beyond imparts a deeper repose yet. A cheerful Cape cart trots by with its happy family party snug under the cool cover. The lively Africander whistles and shows his teeth to you with a saluting grin, as he lolls upon the burden behind the slow-moving oxen and the patient mule. And into all things the marvellous blue of the heavens by day, the marvellous brilliance of the stars by night, put a spirit of gracefulness, of tenderness, and of romance. It is, indeed, a favoured land, for the climate, for the growth of the soil, for natural beauties of a thousand kinds.

LIBRARY OF THE

CHAPTER XVI.

AN IMPORTANT UNDERTAKING.

Before dealing with the docks and the breakwater now in course of throwing out a long enfolding arm upon the waters of Table Bay, I desire to say a few words about the Royal Observatory of the Cape of Good Hope. I had the pleasure of being introduced to Dr. David Gill, the Astronomer-Royal, and to his accomplished wife, who is well known as the author of an eloquent narrative of the six months she spent upon the Island of Ascension with her husband, whilst he was engaged in some complicated and highly important astronomicial calculations and observations. The Observatory is a fine old building, designed by Telford, and stands amidst pretty grounds of its own, whence you command a noble view of the range of mountains running into and passing the Devil's Peak, as one of these striking eminences is called. Some useful astronomical work has been performed at this Observatory, and the maritime world will at least thank me for referring to labours which must be of infinite value to the navigator.

The Cape of Good Hope, Dr. Gill informed me, has always been the headquarters of astronomy in the southern hemisphere. The first fairly accurate catalogue of the stars of these skies was prepared by the famous Abbé de La Caille, from observations made at the Cape in 1751–52, and published at Paris in 1757.

"For nearly seventy years," continued Dr. Gill, "there was no further advance in the astronomy of the southern heavens. In Europe there had indeed been

accumulated at the observatories of Greenwich, Paris, Berlin, Gotha, and elsewhere a mass of observations, all of them characterized by an accuracy which I must not say has been very greatly exceeded by the scientific precision of the present day. Thus, the places of the principal stars of the northern hemisphere were clearly known; but, save for the labours of La Caille, those of the southern heavens were conjectured with but a rude approximation to the truth. A southern observatory was needed, not only for the advancement of astronomy, but for the purposes of the higher navigation, for the determination of the moon's parallax, and the law and constants of refraction. What nation so peculiarly fitted to enter upon this important undertaking as Great Britain? She maintained but one Royal observatory—yet one that was *facile princeps* as to current activity and the greatness of its history.

"It was not too much," the doctor proceeded, "that she should be called upon to found and support another observatory, seeing that her empire extended equally north and south, and that the utmost efforts of an observatory in one hemisphere could accomplish little compared with what was possible of achievement by the co-operation of two observatories. Great Britain had recently acquired the Cape of Good Hope, where the climate was of proved suitability for astronomical research, where the latitude differed about ninety degrees from that of Greenwich, and where the difference of longitude from Greenwich was inconsiderable. Indeed, it would be difficult to find on the face of the globe two positions more favourably situated for mutual co-operation in astronomical research than the observatories of Greenwich and the Cape of Good Hope. You will find a detailed account of the circumstances which led to the

founding of the Cape Observatory in yonder volume of the memoirs of the Royal Astronomical Society.* It would occupy too much time to recount the labours of my predecessors, but some names I should not like to omit even in this brief chat. There was Henderson, who succeeded Fallows. He resigned his appointment after little more than a year's service, and accepted the Professorship of Astronomy in the University of Edinburgh. But, sir, he did very remarkable work in that time. It was he, indeed, who laid the first highly accurate foundation of the sidereal astronomy of the southern hemisphere. Nor was this all; for, in addition to the invaluable star catalogues which he prepared from his observations, he was the first astronomer to measure with any approximation to truth the parallax (or distance) of a fixed star.

"He was succeeded," continued Dr. Gill, "by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Thomas Maclear, who held the post of Her Majesty's Astronomer at the Cape from 1834 to 1870. Maclear, sir, was a person of singular energy. His appetite for work exceeded his power of intellectual digestion. He is best known by his measurement of an arc of meridian, an achievement which proved the symmetry within narrow limits of the form of the two hemispheres of the earth. This symmetry less accurate preceding observation had rendered doubtful. Maclear also confirmed the results of past researches on the parallax of stars. He stood amongst the foremost as a close observer of comets in the southern skies. This was, indeed, his favourite work, and soon after the

* The account is voluminous and ponderous. The story of the observatory lightly told would prove a useful contribution to general literature. The hand (if the health permitted) that penned the delightful "Six Months in Ascension" might find a congenial task in such a work.

appearance of a comet in the southern hemisphere there would be printed a record of it from the pen of Maclear, with plans deduced from his observations. In addition, he made and reduced tidal observations, acted on committees for the establishment of lighthouses, and in this and other ways so crowded his time with labours that he found it impossible to overtake the reductions of his numerous observations. He retired in 1870, and was succeeded by Mr. E. J. Stone, at that time Chief Assistant at Greenwich. The choice was a fortunate one. Mr. Stone was not so much an observer as a computer. He reduced many of Maclear's observations, and published them in the form of two star catalogues; he also employed his staff in re-observing the stars which had been first noted by La Caille in 1750, and finally completed a catalogue of twelve thousand stars, certainly one of the most valuable of existing contributions to sidereal astonomy."

Further conversation with Dr. Gill enabled me to ascertain that the aim and scope of the work at the Observatory had been very greatly extended by him, and that since his appointment as Astronomer-Royal he has introduced many new instruments and methods of research. The transit circle, he told me, a twin instrument with the transit circle at Greenwich, has been actively employed in the usual meridinal work of a standard observatory. The heliometer which was used by him at Ascension was purchased from Lord Crawford, transported to the Cape, and devoted to researches on the distances of the fixed stars. So satisfactory was this work that the Admiralty have promised a new and powerful instrument that will prove the finest heliometer in the world.* Another exceedingly interesting instru-

* I understood that this instrument had not, at the date of my conversation with the Astronomer-Royal, been delivered to him.

ment is the Indian theodolite. It was originally designed for the great trigonometrical survey of India, but was found too heavy, and consequently too difficult of transport for practical use. On the recommendation of General Walker, superintendent of the survey, this instrument was lent by the Indian Government to the Cape Observatory. Dr. Gill informed me that he employs it in determining the declination of stars, not in the customary way—that is by observing their altitudes at meridian passage—but by observing the azimuth of their greatest elongations east and west of the meridian. The declinations are thus determined without risk of errors due to refraction and other causes. I also gathered that Dr. Gill has considerably improved the original instrument, more particularly by the introduction of the electric light for the illumination of the microscopes and divisions of the circles.

"It is certainly strange," he remarked to me, "that this observatory, so remote as it is from the workshops and appliances which abound in Europe, should be the first to reduce to a practical form the employment of the electric light for the irradiation of astronomical instruments. In 1882," he went on, "I succeeded in obtaining some fine photographs of the great comet of that year. These plates included such sharp pictures of the neighbouring stars that I devised a scheme for obtaining star maps of the whole southern heavens by direct photography. We have already over three hundred photographs. The project involves in all about one thousand five hundred pictures, and there then remains the gigantic labour of measuring, reducing, and cataloguing the photographed stars, numbering between four and five hundred thousand."

He also informed me that, backed by the late Sir

Bartle Frere and Sir George Colley, he started a geoditic survey of South Africa, a work yet being carried on under his direction. The survey of Natal is finished, and great progress has been made in that of the Cape Colony. The results, besides forming a basis for the accurate cartography of the country, must furnish a valuable addition to existing data for determining the form and dimensions of the earth. I could point to many other features illustrating the past value of this institution and the useful work it is doing, but it is time I should return to Table Bay, and speak of what is being done there.

It is impossible to survey this noble tract of water without appreciating the old political wisdom that dictated the British appropriation of Cape Town.* The Suez Canal has diverted probably two-thirds of the marine processions that formerly sailed to and from India and the East by way of the Cape; but we all, unhappily, know that in the event of war it would not be very hard to as effectually bar the narrow channel through the desert, as a dock may be closed by swinging its gates to. Nothing can be more obvious than that a maritime nation should possess not only coaling-stations easy of access and rich in appliance for prompt despatch, but havens also for the secure lodgment and protection

* 1806. T. H. Brooke, in a "History of St. Helena," relates a story I have not elsewhere met with. He says that, in or about 1651, the Dutch, desirous of possessing the Cape, that was then in the hands of the English, effected their object by bribing the chief of the settlement to send home a representation that the natives were "cannibals and most cruel, terrible creatures, so that it was impossible to hold out against them." This report produced an order to quit the settlement, and the Dutch thereupon removed thither their settlers from St. Helena, which, being found deserted by some homeward-bound ships of the London East India Company, was taken possession of.

of its mercantile fleets, should the blocking of the canal force vessels into the old long ocean route. Hence a distinctly Imperial interest attaches, in my humble opinion, to the work that is now being done in Table Bay in connection with the docks. The point was well put to me by a gentleman of influence and distinction in the colony.

"The opening of the Suez Canal," he said, "diverted not only the traffic but the attention of the public to the importance of the Cape route. But let us imagine a war between England and some other European Power possessed of a powerful navy. Although theoretically protected by International Treaty, can it be questioned that the Suez Canal would, sooner or later, be blocked? Conceive this possibility, and the importance of this port is immediately understood. To my mind, the furtherance and completion of these works here is not a matter for Cape Town alone, nor for the colony generally, but one that directly appeals to the Imperial interests of Great Britain. There is Simon's Bay, it is true. Simon's Bay has certainly a good anchorage, and it is a sheltered harbour, but it is not easily defended; it has not a graving dock nor jetties for the berthing of ships. In bad weather, communication with the shore is almost impossible. It is not connected by railway or even good roads to the rest of the colony, and Simon's Town could not, if called upon, supply the wants of any considerable number of men. Now, on the shores of Table Bay you find the largest town in South Africa—the seat of government, the headquarters of the Imperial troops, the chief centre of commercial enterprise, the terminus of a network of railways traversing the whole country, commodious docks capable of receiving the largest mercantile steamers, transports, or men-of-war, and a graving dock

in which vessels of great tonnage may be overhauled and repaired. The breakwater already supplies a large sheltered area of deep water, and when the works are completed the largest fleet ever likely to visit us may ride with perfect security in Table Bay."

First, let us see what accommodation the present dock area offers. I find that the quay space is about 6500 feet, and that the depth of water at low spring tides is from 15 feet to 27 feet. There is warehouse accommodation for the storage of 10,000 tons, and there is a graving dock 530 feet long, with a depth of twenty-four feet of water on the blocks. The engine empties this dock in from three to five hours. There is a patent slip, tested to take up vessels of 1200 tons register. Sailing craft requiring despatch can unload from 500 to 600 tons per day if necessary. The superintendent of the docks informed me that steamers discharge and load cargo and take in coal to the amount of about 2000 tons in twenty-four hours. It is worth observing that even with the present appliances at the disposal of the dock authorities, a steamer calling for coal was supplied at the rate of 150 tons per hour.

I asked the superintendent to give me an instance of despatch. "There was the *Kaikoura*," he said, "a magnificent steamer of close upon 4500 tons. She arrived here some months ago, with her propeller broken; she discharged 300 tons of cargo, was taken into the graving-dock, had her broken blade removed, shipped a new one, left the graving-dock, reshipped her cargo, took on board about 800 tons of coal, and was ready for sea within twenty-eight hours of the time she commenced to discharge; there being handled, in all, about 1400 tons. The *Coptic*, another steamer, of 4368 tons, formerly well-known in the Atlantic trade,

had arrived a few weeks earlier than the *Kaikoura*, in the same predicament. We discharged, docked, repaired, undocked, and reloaded her with similar promptitude. I do not scruple to say that, even as we now stand, we give such despatch as no other port in the world can surpass."

"Have you any tugs?" I asked.

"Yes; three powerful vessels. Our breakwater is only in its beginning, as you know; yet, such is the shelter it already affords, that the largest class of vessels can run for Table Bay, and lie in security there. They are sure of receiving every assistance, and have nothing now to fear though they should be in a disabled condition or without anchors."

I obtained a very full account of the origin and progress of the breakwater during a long conversation with Mr. Thwaites, the resident engineer, and if I dwell at some length upon this subject, I hope to be forgiven on the plea that I am dealing with a matter of first-rate consequence in the interests of our navy and mercantile marine, and of essential importance to the prosperity of our South African colonies. In the first place, it should be stated that many ships and many lives have been lost in Table Bay because of the violent storms of wind which come on to blow with startling suddenness from the north and north-west quarters, and because, until the breakwater was begun, ships which anchored in the Bay were during these tempests exposed to all the horrors of a lee-shore. Mr. Thwaites informed me that the first waggon of stone for the breakwater that was to run out from the shore N. by E. ½ E., was deposited by Prince Alfred on June 7, 1860. Eight years later the work had progressed to a length of 1870 feet. Its base was then in about thirty-five feet of water, and the docks and out-

lying works, along with a portion of the anchorage, were fairly protected by it. In 1880, as I gather, the increasing trade of the port necessitated an enlargement of accommodation. It was determined to lengthen the breakwater by 800 feet in the same direction as the existing structure extended, and then continue it to a further distance of 1000 feet eastwards of that line.

"To the present time," said the engineer to me, "this work has been carried out a distance of six hundred and sixty feet, and is still proceeding."

"What is the total length at present?"

"Two thousand five hundred and thirty feet. The bend referred to is already half-finished, and obviously every foot of breakwater now advanced will yield proportionally a much larger protected area than a similar progress did formerly. I should tell you that the quarry from which the material for the breakwater is being excavated is so contrived that at a very small expenditure it may be made to furnish additional dock accommodation of eight acres, with a minimum depth at low water springs of twenty-seven feet."

"And as to your outer harbour?"

"The scheme has been adopted, and in due course we shall have an enclosure of sixty-two acres. The mound of the south arm, which will run parallel to the breakwater, at a distance of sixteen hundred and fifty feet south of it, will shortly be begun. This will ensure the protection of the quay wall from the heavy breaking of seas raised by the south-east wind, and in this way will supply valuable berthage room."

I said to the engineer that I was not a little surprised on entering the bay from England and looking through the port-hole to find the docks brilliantly illuminated with electric light. "It impressed me somewhat," said

I, "to find progress so distinctive as this in Cape Town."

"No, no," he exclaimed, laughing, "we are not wholly barbarians here! We are six thousand miles distant, it is true, from the mother country, but for all that we know what is doing, and what we like we adopt. There was some trouble at the start with the lights; they were uncertain; but they are pretty steady now."

"Have the Government here done anything in the way of strengthening the defences at Table Bay? You know, of course, what is doing at Simon's Bay?"

"Yes; but I think when our works are completed it will be judged that the money which has been expended at Simon's Bay might have been more profitably devoted to the defences of a haven whose houses, at all events, do not lie immediately exposed to the shells and shots of an enemy.* What has been done at Table Bay is this: The Amsterdam Battery was in 1879 considerably strengthened by the heaping up in front of it of surplus material from the breakwater quarry excavation; and two new batteries of power have been built this year—one at Mouille Point and the other at the south head of the bay at Craig's Tower. The harbour work supplied both the labour and the tools for these undertakings."

"Are your dues heavy?"

"No; they were reduced in correspondence with the increase of the trade. When we first opened, five shillings a ton was charged upon all goods landed or shipped to ports beyond the limits of this colony. The charge is

* It is whispered in Cape Town that jealousy is at the bottom of the Admiralty objection to Table Bay; that if the admiral, whoever he might be, should come to Table Bay, he would be under the control of the governor, whereas at Simon's Town he remains lord paramount. Why a few miles should make so great a difference in the powers of the admiral, I confess I do not understand.

now two shillings a ton. The coastwise dues are also reduced from two shillings and sixpence to one shilling, but we keep up the old charges on live stock."

"What do you charge vessels?"

"Sixpence a ton, but they may remain here for twenty-one days."

"You speak of the increase of your trade; kindly give me some statistics."

"Well, sir, it should suffice if I tell you that the total gross tonnage outwards and inwards in the year after the opening of the Alfred Dock was 100,058 tons, and that last year the total was 814,840 tons. In 1870, we had 190 vessels, in 1885 we had 734 vessels. The aggregate gross register tonnage dealt with by us from 1870 down to last year is 8,055,785."

"These figures seem full of health," said I. "I am sure they will be looked at with interest by many at home. And now may I ask how much have you spent down to the present time?"

"I cannot answer to the present time; but to December 31, 1884, there has been disbursed £1,273,078. The revenue during the same period has been £933,048. The last yearly returns showed £72,197. This is sufficient to pay working expenses as well as the interest on money already expended or likely to be required to complete the works and to provide for their maintenance."

So much for the statistics of a really notable undertaking. The engineer showed me a beautiful model (the work of convicts) of the breakwater and of the new dock area. It does not need much more than a glance at this model to grasp the whole significance of the fine project. We know at home, perhaps through lack of them, the value of harbours of refuge, and it is inspiriting

indeed to find in this remote part of the world so big and important an illustration of commercial instinct as you witness in the works in progress in the Bay, combined, as those instincts are, with such a perception of marine needs as renders the vast labour a distinct act of philanthropy in its way.

Were the particular spirit you remark in full operation in the Cape Town docks extended throughout the colony those who think with misgiving of the future of South Africa might pluck up heart. It seems hard, indeed, that with poverty and misery teeming in our English byways and alleys there should be no outlook for a man willing to put his hand to resolute work in these fertile leagues of colonial soil. I was in Cape Town when news came of the rioting in London and the provinces. I had heard much of the productiveness of the northern and eastern provinces here; and it was painful to think of the suffering and penury those riots indicated, and contrast them with the possibilities offered by a land of plenty, wasting its growths to the sun, yet virtually barred against the thousands who are oppressing the heart of the nation with their cries of famine and their anguish of houselessness.

Nevertheless, it is only too certain that the emigrant is not wanted here. It is the country of the black man —of that scorner of clothes, the noble savage. White labour languishes; energy fails at the moment prospects open. The Boer, the most adhesive of mortals, rests contented with a squalid home and untilled acres more extensive than his eye can survey. The true colonial instinct is wanting — that indescribable intellectual capacity of taking root where the foot falls. Ambition here seems to impel a man no further than the desire to obtain money enough to enable him, whether he be an

Englishman or a German, to return home, and stop there. A posterity may arise that will be as the vine-bush is or the gum-tree—a pure growth of South African soil, but with antecedents with a beginning in white hands. But down to the present moment the symptoms are not those of a colonization such as created a great republic across the western ocean, such as has builded an empire of cities and populous towns in the distant Pacific. I say it is a pity; for you cannot think of the mighty tracts of green and beautiful country stretching in mountains and valleys and plains to the equatorial latitudes, and of the dreadful poverty you see and hear of and read about in London and throughout Great Britain and Ireland without deep regret that this land should be universally declared to offer no opportunities to those in need of bread.

Determined to obtain an independent opinion on a subject never more interesting than at the present moment, I consulted Mr. T. E. Fuller, a prominent member of the Legislative Assembly, and a person who had taken an active interest for years in the question of labour importation; I spoke to this gentleman, I say, about the emigration of the poor of England to South Africa, and I will endeavour briefly to repeat the matter of our conversation.

"In the present depressed condition of the country," he said, in reply to my question, "it is not very easy to answer your inquiry. We are just now passing through a rather serious crisis. After a period of great prosperity and large expenditure, when everybody has been over-building, over-buying, and over-trading, South Africa finds itself face to face with a semi-paralyzed trade, low prices, and restricted commercial operations. There has been a long drought, now happily passed, but it has

greatly accentuated the general depression. At such a time, then, it certainly would be most unwise to advocate emigration to South Africa. It should be known, moreover, that we have in this country a large native population. They do not, it is true, satisfy as yet the labour demands of the colony, but their presence prevents the absorption of the white artisan, clerk, or agriculturist. It is this absorption that renders emigration practicable and a success in other countries. In this particular part of the world the aboriginal does not disappear before the white man; the natives increase, and, in my opinion, the future of the country depends not on their being civilized out of existence, but on their learning to be industrious, and so in time becoming consumers and customers. Now, in those parts where improvement in the habits of the black is noticeable the outlook is most hopeful. On the frontier, for instance, where the native population is large, they are learning how to earn money and how to spend it. The old tribal life, with its bovine traditions and milk-and-mealie diet, is slowly changing, and in the midst of the "locations" or Kaffir villages you will find European dress and the cheaper fineries of civilization steadily taking the place of the paint-and-blanket costume of the raw savage."

"But do I understand," I exclaimed, "that there is no room for the emigrant here—that, in short, South Africa does not want him?"

"No, I do not say that. Emigration, in my opinion, is as necessary now to the prosperity of the colony as ever it was in earlier times. We cannot advance without a large increase of industrial population. What I mean is, it would be cruel to invite artisans and clerks or even agricultural labourers to a merely speculative immigration to this country unless they came under

some distinct arrangement. There is no progress to be got out of the mere squatting of farmers' sons upon large plots of uncultivated land. But for fresh Northern blood, for men who will work with their hands, dig, plough, and sow with perseverance and determination, there is room, plenty of room, if they can be placed with judgment, and provided with means enough to tide them over the time occupied in obtaining a good footing. Some important districts of the country owe their prosperity to emigration of this kind. A remarkable illustration of this may be found in the Germans who were settled in the district of King William's Town at the close of the Crimean war."

"Does your Government encourage emigration?"

"Well, we must be said to have suspended operations owing to the present depressed state of trade. By this suspension is meant that no grants are made for the introduction of artisans or labourers, or any assistance rendered to those who desire to import labour. But there is land in various parts of the country still available for cultivation, and this land is being slowly but surely occupied by settlers."

"But how about obtaining land of this character?" I asked.

"Every now and then large tracts come under British or colonial rule, such as the Transkeian territory to the eastward, and Bechuanaland to the north, which offer a field to the settler. These districts are now being settled, and in course of time will support a considerable population—indeed, the Transkeian territory already does so. With regard to Bechuanaland, it will probably be settled from the surrounding district, and it is yet to be determined how far it will maintain a large population. Irrigation, too, is another vital question. We have, no

doubt, leagues of splendid country, but much of it is fit only for the feeding of stock; for, owing to the want of water, nothing could be done with it in the way of cultivation. At this moment the Government are parcelling out allotments in connection with the only considerable irrigation work undertaken by the Legislature. This is Van Wyk's Vlei, in the district of Carnarvon. The Government hope to irrigate by means of this Vlei as much as two thousand five hundred acres. The lots, I believe, will consist of five or six acres each."

"Is there anything outside the cultivation of the soil to back a scheme of immigration?"

"We have, as you know, the Diamond Fields, but that industry is established, and there is nothing in it to tempt a speculative immigration. There are also the gold fields; by-and-by they may furnish a field for labour, but they offer no prospects as yet for anything like a general population."

With this terminated my conversation with Mr. Fuller. The conclusion I have arrived at is that England must dismiss South Africa from her mind as a refuge and a promise for her poor. It is the climate and the country of the black man, and Mr. Fuller is undoubtedly correct in declaring that the hope of the colony lies in accepting the negro as a permanent and fruitful product of the soil, and in so helping him into civilization as to qualify him to become not only a useful labourer but a valuable trade constituent.

CHAPTER XVII.

COASTWISE TO ALGOA BAY.

A FURIOUS South-Easter was raging down Table Mountain and whipping the waters of Table Bay into a surface of boiling cream. The cloud shrouding the mountain to a depth possibly of a thousand feet was in places of a violet hue, shot with purple—the true complexion of an electric storm, and you looked for flashes of lightning amid the whirling savage masses of vapour to correspond with the roaring as of thunder that trumpeted in deep-throated notes out of the rugged defiles and from the shrouded depths of twenty chasms and valleys.

It was our day of sailing, and punctually at noon, the hour appointed for our departure to the various towns lying along the South and East Coasts of Africa, I made my appearance on board the *Spartan*, a ship of three thousand five hundred tons; but it was soon evident that there was no chance of getting out of dock whilst the wild South-Easter blew. The entrance to the Cape Docks is narrow, and rendered not a little inconvenient by the curvature of one of the piers. A vessel has to be swung in order to point her head to this entrance, and, if it is blowing hard, considerable risk attends the manœuvring, for the strain on the warps is enormous as a ship brings her broadside to the gale, and, if a rope should part, the vessel may swing into another, and wreck her, or do herself prodigious damage. Hence Captain Wait, the master, was wise to linger until the fury of the wind showed some signs of abatement.

Yet I took notice here of still another illustration of the shipmaster's anxieties and worries. The dockmaster, a hearty old sailor, was for pushing the *Spartan* out to sea, wind or no wind. It was Saturday. His wife was in a cottage in one of the beautiful bays down the coast, and he was anxious to join her that night and spend his Sunday out of sight of the docks. I did not much relish his eagerness, for who would willingly put to sea in half a hurricane? and I said to him, "See here, my friend; if you were to be held responsible and had to pay for any damage that might follow the parting of a warp whilst this ship was hauling out, you know very well you would keep her snug in her berth if you had to sit down and wait a fortnight for the wind to blow itself out."

He said, with a loud and hearty laugh, "So!" By which I think he meant "Yes;" for I have observed that the Dutchmen here, when they mean "Yes," will say "So," and the English have picked up the expression.

Captain Wait came to the rail, looking anxious and worried, and stared at the cloud on the mountain and at the water in the dock that was running in processions of little seas with the fierce chasing of the gale. I said to the dockmaster, "The Captain is worrying himself because he is forced to lose a few hours of time; and in these days of despatch hours have literally more significance than weeks had when you were first going to sea."

"So," answered the dockmaster.

"He is thinking," I continued, "of the various ports he has to call at, of the likelihood of detention at them, of the character of the weather that may confront him, of his having to discharge and take in cargo, and to return here and receive freight and coal, and be in readiness to sail punctually on the day appointed by the

Postmaster-General. This is on one side of his mind. On the other side is this consideration: if he starts away at once in the face of this gale, and injures his ship, or does damage to some other vessel, his directors will call him up and want to know why on earth he should have been so rash as to jeopardize life and property by attempting to haul out of dock in the teeth of a raging South-Easter."

"So," exclaimed the dockmaster.

"Is it, therefore, very wonderful," said I, "that the typical skipper should, at the age of forty, submit the aspect of a man of sixty, with white hair, wrinkled brow, and halting gait? Do I express your sentiments?"

"Yah, boss," answered the dockmaster, and with that I left him.

In any part of Cape Town a South-Easter is an abominable thing; the atmosphere is clouded with a reddish dust, that rises to a great height, and veils objects as a fog; stones hurtle through the air, and many more trees than are actually snapped off would, I think, be levelled were it not for the slope they take from these distracting hurricanes whilst young, so that their posture of sharp inclination leaves them to a great extent unharmed by the tempest. But the South-Easter is nowhere more abominable than in the docks. Coal-dust blinds the eyes and fills the nostrils. The dust of the town falls like rain, chokes the ears, and penetrates the pores of the skin. The howling aloft is positively terrifying, and yet the sky is of a beautiful blue overhead, and a pale azure down to the horizon. You are told, and fully believe, that a few miles out there is probably a light air blowing from a contrary direction and perfectly smooth fine-weather water. The whole of the thunderous business localized within a circumference small enough

for the eye to measure is owing to Table Mountain, and the storm-cloud which the magic of its cold flat top evokes from the radiant atmosphere about it. They call the South-Easter at Cape Town "the Doctor," and conclude that, were it not for these winds, the pestiferous smells which hang about the streets in stagnant weather would speedily lay the whole of the population low with fever. The theory is convenient and accommodating, and I do not say that it is not sound. Yet there is a touch of South African laziness in it, too: the willingness, in short, to accept this wind as an apology for the production of evil smells. Were the South-Easters to cease, then, perhaps, the sanitary authorities would go to work to improve the drains, and make the town sweet; and better, I think, good drainage and freedom from storms ferocious enough to hurl down rocks, than evil odours, with no other remedy for them than such as Table Mountain periodically precipitates.

There came a lull at last. The captain immediately gave orders; warps were run out, and this ship of three hundred and eighty feet in length was without misadventure propelled softly through the entrance and away out into Table Bay. Here it was blowing great guns indeed; but it was an off-shore wind, and the white waters were but as ripples as they raced seething forwards along our steady iron sides. Sure enough, when we had steamed a little to the southward and westward of Sea Point, we ran out of the gale. You saw the line of it dropping astern, a deeply dark blue, with a madness in the foaming fling of every surge. It was as plainly defined, indeed, as a fog bank, and the phenomenon was rendered extraordinarily impressive and majestic by the spectacle of the huge mountains clothed in a vapour of slate and violet that boiled over crag and precipice, and sent down

its thunder and fury of wind out of the heart of it that raged like the fierce gyrations of clouds rushing and melting one into another in the centre of a cyclone.*

The whole of the coast from Table Bay down to Cape Point—in other words down to the veritable Cape of Good Hope itself—is grand and noble, full of spacious bays terraced by mountains, the loom of which makes you think of giants bearing the burden of the skies on their rounded backs. Now and again the eye catches the white glancing of tracts of sand, otherwise there is little of South African suggestion till you round L'Agulhas. One watches this coast with extraordinary interest. It is the southernmost point of the burning continent of Africa, and you see L'Agulhas going down in a long slope in the shape of a Titanic forefinger pointing to the desolation of the mighty Southern Ocean beyond. Once again memory recurs to those ancient maritime chronicles of heroic strife and triumphant adventure; and to the imaginative gaze this sea washing the forefoot of the headlands yonder is whitened with the canvas of ships belonging to vanished centuries, with sturdy bearded mariners eagerly gazing at the land from under the sharp of their hands, their brains full of fantastic dreams of wealth and of wonders.

Yet the interests of this seaboard, though not a little romantic in their early history, are full of melancholy too. As you steam along, a dozen tales of shipwreck are repeated, and the later story of the coast seems to be almost wholly comprised in annals of peril, suffering,

* "The South-Easter comes from the land with great fury. I have seen ships rounding the point with all sail set in a light breeze; then suddenly meet the fiery South-Easter on opening the bay, which compelled them to let fly everything to save their masts" (Horsburg). "Fiery" may here mean "fury." As a matter of fact, the South-Easter, coming out of the heart of a mass of dampness, is cold.

and death. "Do you see that opening there?" Captain Wait says, coming up to me and pointing to the land where a great height of cliff falls sheer as though cleft in twain by some cyclopean chisel. "That's Danger Point, and close to it is a rock called Birkenhead Rock, because it was there the *Birkenhead* struck and foundered."

No Englishman could look at the spot without emotion. The tribute implied in that wreck to the discipline and manhood of the British soldier is so moving, so beautiful, so lustrous, that I cannot think of any achievement on the field of battle that surpasses it as an illustration of the spirit of our troops. There never was a nobler funeral, nor did old ocean ever strangle hearts more tender and spirits more valourous in her cold embrace. If there be one thing more than another that should have conduced to the effective lighting of this coast it must be, you would think, the memory of the loss of the *Birkenhead*. I do not mean to say that she was wrecked in consequence of the ill-lighting of this sea-board; but the significance the disaster took from the behaviour of the men should have inspired, one might suppose, a determination to safeguard life against these formidable shores as far as it is possible to do so by beacons and signals.

I am sorry to say that the whole of this coast is very badly lighted. I have leant over the ship's side at night, watching the sullen loom of the land, and wondered as I observed the dangerous character of the shore, at the indifference of those whom the colonial public render responsible for effective coast lighting to the pressing needs of the sailor who has to navigate these waters. In a stretch of nine hundred miles of extremely perilous navigation there are only thirteen coast lights, those,

namely, which are to be found between the headland known as Great Paternoster and Port Natal. Some elderly nautical gentleman of influence in the Lights department is reported to have declared that lighthouses merely tend to make the mariner neglectful. On a coast, says this elderly nautical authority, where lights are few and far between the mariner will proceed cautiously, using his lead, studying his chart, and providing for a respectable offing. Give him plenty of lights, and the chances are that his confidence in their indications will end in his shipwreck! This is only to be paralleled by the logic in a Board of Trade answer to a demand for harbours of refuge in England. "If," exclaimed Mr. Joseph Chamberlain in effect, "we construct harbours of refuge, we shall be rendering the shipowner even more indifferent to life than he now is, for he will take no care at all to render his ships seaworthy, knowing that in times of peril and disaster there will be plenty of secure havens for the master to fetch and ride in!"

I do not want to contrast the English with the South African coast, but I cannot help noticing that in two hundred and sixty-five miles of English seaboard you have thirteen lights, all of a brilliant and specific character, not to mention the innumerable illuminations of harbours and so forth; whilst there are only thirteen lights, many of them bad, in *nine hundred* miles of perilous coast incessantly skirted by mail and other steamers and sailing vessels, carrying in the course of a year thousands of lives and freights of an enormous aggregate value! I will briefly describe the lighting hereabout in the hope of emphasizing to the Colonial Government ear the urgent cry of the mariner who has to do business at the South African ports. Starting from Paternoster Point, you steer along seventy miles

before you come to Robben Light. Then from Cape Point Light you steam past eighty-five miles of frowning current-ridden and shoal-laden coast before arriving at Cape Agulhas Lighthouse. Then on through another hundred and twenty miles of blackness to Cape St. Blaize, where you find a feeble red light that ceases to be deceptive only when it is invisible. Then past one hundred and thirty miles of malignant coast to Cape St. Francis, beyond which there is an interval as far as Cape Recife of forty-five miles of lampless seaboard. Then far to the North-East is Bird Island Light, another red and almost worthless signal, unwisely affirmed to be visible ten to twelve miles distant, and designed to guard the mariner against one of the most deadly of the many deadly points of this coast. Another thirty miles bring you to a green light at the mouth of Kowie River—a light of miserable character, reckoned to be visible six miles. After sixty-five more miles of blackness you make East London Light, and then, until you reach Port Natal, you must steam a distance of no less than two hundred and fifty miles without witnessing any other illumination on shore than the dangerous and misleading bush fires.

A master of a vessel said to me: "In spite of the dense fogs which hang about this coast, in spite of night haze, mist, and mirage, Cape Point Lighthouse is fixed at the height of eight hundred and sixteen feet, and though it is supposed to be visible thirty-six miles off, yet I have passed it within twelve miles without seeing it. In defiance of the atmospheric dangers here the authorities insist upon using red lights, utterly regardless of the fact that fog absorbs nearly seventy-five per cent. of red rays. Then you have bush fires, which are easily mistaken for the sort of light they think good

enough for this coast. Only the other day a vessel was stranded in Struys Bay through mistaking a bush fire for L'Agulhas Light. Hence you see the need of lights of such a distinctive nature as to render it impossible to confound them with the deceptive gleam of the bush fire."

This question of lights is of paramount importance, and it is to be earnestly hoped, not only for the sake of the shipper and the mariner, but in the interests of the passenger, that the Cape Government will give the subject their immediate and earnest attention.

It is not without astonishment, mixed with lively admiration, that going on deck one morning you behold right in front of you the town of Port Elizabeth. You are in Algoa Bay. The ocean swell rolling to this open roadstead heaves the great fabric whose heart has stopped its passionate beat, and that now lies rolling solemnly to its anchor. The eye follows the sandy spit to where the houses stand, and there, grouped before you, are the buildings of a populous, bright, picturesque town. I cannot but think of Port Elizabeth as one of the best illustrations anywhere to be met with of English pluck and determination. As you stand on the ship you can blot the town from your sight by covering it with your hand; then to left and right you see nothing but the barren, fiery, inhospitable, life-defying African sand. Keep the town covered, and think a little of the sort of temptation those parched and arid wastes within the sphere of your view must offer to men in search of a spot for building homes for themselves, and then drop your hand and look at the town, and judge the wonderful spirit that must have gone to the creation of those fine buildings and wide streets, when choice had been made of this desolate tract of coast as a site for a colony. The lack

of vegetation gives, indeed, a hardness of tone to the place as you view it from the bay; but it is fully as picturesque as Broadstairs, Ramsgate, or Folkestone, seen from the sea, mellowed as the tints of those towns are by time. Port Elizabeth has by no means the brand-new look you would expect in so recent a creation. Assume the ship to be lying bow on to the land; on the brow of the hill you perceive the remains of an old fort called Fort Frederic, built in times tolerably ancient in the history of this town—that is to say, in 1843, when we were fighting the Kafirs. The grouping of the houses gathers density and substantiality from the new market building and the Public Offices. You see the spire of the Catholic church peeping over the housetops; the Town Hall; a tall lighthouse set in the midst of the place to the right. The very pleasing picture is a little deformed perhaps by a large space of barren ground, dedicated to Elizabeth Lady Donkin, from whom the settlement takes its name and whose memory is perpetuated by an obelisk or pyramid. This gap is a blot; it is treeless and brown with dust and heat. Were it covered with buildings in correspondence with those around it, it would be impossible to find fault with the spectacle the town presents. Still directing the gaze to the right, you see, prominent amongst the clusters of houses, Grey's Institute and School, Trinity Church, other houses of worship, and the large block of the Provincial Hospital. The foreground is full of the busy suggestions of a railway station and goods sheds, of a long embankment, with locomotives puffing as they drag trains of trucks after them, of jetties, and of numerous lighters, rolling on the blue waters. Away over the flats flows the Zwaart-Kops River, and in the far distance you see Winterberg and the lofty bloom of the Zuurberg

Mountains, with a trend of coast terminating in the dim blue of Bird Island.*

I was so much interested in the mere existence of this place, I felt so warm an admiration for the high characteristic of adventurous courage which the white town, lying radiant in the early morning sunshine, expressed and embodied, that I made it my business to inquire into its trade and prospects. First of all I wanted to know if the Port Elizabeth people had any scheme on hand for providing shelter in excess of that naturally supplied by the long sandy spit to the many ships which bring cargo to Algoa Bay. This question will be the first to occur to a man standing as I did on the deck of a large mail steamer rolling heavily upon the ocean swell, and watching the plunging and tossing of four or five ships and barques as they strained at their cables, though there was very little wind, and a sky of tropical beauty shone overhead. But it seems that the Harbour Board have no scheme of any sort in hand. Sir John Coode, who appears to have inspected all these South African harbours, and to have offered many suggestions fruitful of municipal squabbles, projected, I believe, a large enclosed outer dock that was to be built of concrete. But the prices of feathers and wool, I presume, were not such as to justify the heavy disbursements Sir John Coode's theories of commodiousness and security would involve, and the result is the large enclosed outer dock to be built of concrete remains as it was—an idea only.

"But how," I asked, "do you contrive your loading and discharging?"

* Algoa Bay has one feature of extraordinary historic interest: for near to the Bird Island group is St. Croix Island, the first land made by Bartholomew Dias after rounding the Cape in 1486. The island took its name from a stone cross erected on it by the famous navigator.

"Oh, easily enough," was the answer. "Those two screw-pile jetties there are each of them about eight hundred feet long and forty feet wide, and they are fully equipped with powerful travelling steam-cranes. There is a large fleet of lighters, ranging from thirty to a hundred tons each, and these convey cargo to and from vessels and the shore."

"How about the safety of ships in heavy weather?"

"Why, if ships are well found they may ride as safely here as though they were moored in docks."

This may be so; but for all that the Insurance Companies, I hear, charge extra rates to vessels trading to these open roadsteads.

"What cargoes," I continued, "do the sailing ships bring?"

"Chiefly coal for the railway and for the mines up at Kimberley. We have many small ships arriving with coffee from Rio Janeiro, timber from the Baltic, and kerosene and Yankee 'notions' from the States."

"How is trade?"

"Well, Port Elizabeth has shared in the general depression throughout the colony. Money is very scarce among the farmers, and I will explain why by an example. Take ostrich feathers. In 1884–85, the weight of this article exported hence was pretty much the same in both years, but there was a decrease in value to the amount of £272,263. The exact figures are £579,152 in 1884, and £306,889 in 1885. Our other staples, wool and mohair, have also depreciated, and hence the depression we are all suffering from."

"I understand that your population has decreased; is not that a bad sign?"

"Well, yes; to a certain extent, though the diminution is due not to voluntary withdrawals, but to dis-

missals from the staffs of the various stores, offices, and banks, because labour was very much in excess of the demand for it. A few years ago there were about sixteen thousand whites; now there are about ten thousand; but the blacks are abominably numerous."

I laughed to hear this, for it is a grievance not without a character of humour. Everywhere here the complaint is that Massa Jumbo multiplies a very great deal too fast; that he has no other ambition in life than to secure dollars enough from the white man to enable him to buy heads of cattle to exchange for wives. Jumbo's dignity depends upon the number of his consorts, for the simple reason that they represent property. Pickanninies are necessarily numerous; they of course flourish famously in a climate designed by nature for races who abhor raiment. The white man is unequal to the contest Massa Jumbo proposes, and it sometimes looks to me as though the towns which Europeans have erected upon the plains and sandy shores of South Africa were, at no very remote time, to be occupied by that Jumbo whose prolificness is the white man's despair. Spite of this theory of an outsider, however, it is the opinion of the people of Port Elizabeth that the town has a great future.

"It is the port of Kimberley and the Diamond Fields," said a gentleman to me.

"But are they still very prosperous at Kimberley?" said I.

"Yes," he answered.

"Then what is the meaning of this?" I exclaimed, and I produced a cutting from a Kimberley paper that had been sent to me a few days previously. I read it aloud, and it ran thus: "We have a strong desire to warn people out of employment at a distance from the

Diamond Fields against coming to these parts in search of work. Day after day the post-cart, the mule and ox-waggon, and the railway train bring unfortunates here. Unsuccessful in other places, they seem to have an idea that anybody and everybody can have a chance of doing well on the Diamond Fields. Men of respectability and excellent testimonials; men with a little capital sufficient to carry them on for a week or two in the dispiriting hunt for a billet; men with no character or recommendations, but with a strong capacity for work, and men who are the veritable weeds of society—they all come! It should be widely known throughout the colony that there is less chance of needy men obtaining employment in the Fields than there is in many colonial towns; and it is positively heartrending to see respectable-looking fellows tramping the streets and hanging about corners weary with the sad and sorry duty of looking for a job, and beholding with grim despair the dread prospect of entering the large army of loafers."

"What paper is that taken from?" asked my companion.

"The *Diamond Fields Advertiser*," I answered.

"Humph!" he exclaimed.

"It bears out," I continued, "what was told me in Cape Town—that there is no room for the emigrant. I have already had the evidence of the farm and the field. You have here the testimony of the city and the town. Kimberley has apparently come to the end of its tether."

"No, no," said he.

"Well," said I, "they are saying so there, anyhow."

"Touching Port Elizabeth," said he, "Kimberley, such as it is, and such as it may ultimately prove, is not our only supporter. We are the nearest port to the new

Crown colony of Bechuanaland and the territories stretching northwards to the Zambesi."

"But what is the good," I exclaimed, "of the new Crown colony of Bechuanaland and of the territories stretching northwards to the Zambesi if they are not colonised; if they are not rendered productive by labour; if, in short, they have nothing to export or receive through you?"

"But," said he, "spite of what you may have learnt at Cape Town, what we are all saying here is that the one thing wanted for our immediate advance is population to occupy the great country extending far into the interior. I venture to say," he continued emphatically, "that if the hundreds of thousands who are struggling for bare existence in Great Britain were transferred to South Africa life might indeed be quite as hard for them, but it would be fought out under infinitely healthier conditions."

Meanwhile the large ocean steamship I am aboard of lies rolling at her anchor. Dip, dip, wash, wash! The monotonous motion goes on with its regular creaking and grinding of bulk-heads, the jar of doors upon hooks, the sliding of movable objects from side to side. There are twenty things of beauty to look at—a graceful barque of the old pattern, painted green, with new sheathing lustrous as gold, curtseying her white figure-head to us, then dipping her broadside till her rail looks flush with the sparkling blue swell, her masts with the topgallant yards down, sweeping their delicate fibrine outlines of shroud and stay and running gear upon the soft azure beyond, against which, on the sandy ridge, the toy-like houses of Port Elizabeth mark their proportions with a purity of outline and a tenderness of tint that make a wonder of the sunlighted picture. The

lighters alongside rise and fall with a foaming between of white waters, which wink as though strewn with gems when the droop of the swell throws the shadow off them and leaves them seething fair to the sun; there is a constant lifting of casks and bales and the like to the discordant rattle of the winch; and a perpetual contortion of black figures, agitated, distracted, and howling as they tumble about in the lighters to keep clear of the rising weights. Many hammer-headed sharks, with their large eyes staring languishingly, crab-like, at the extremities of the projection on their heads, swim so close to the surface that their black fins show often wet and gleaming on the brow of the swell; they cruise in restless rounds, and with malignant sweeps of their barbed tails. Whilst watching them I think of what befell a bather in these waters not very long ago. He had dived from the head of that jetty yonder on the left, and was swimming to regain it when a shark nipped his leg off just above the knee, and I am told that had a surgeon applied his saw the amputation could not have been more perfect. The poor fellow was dragged on to the jetty by a boy, carried to the hospital, and, wonderful to relate, might have been seen a fortnight afterwards hobbling about the town on crutches, looking, on the whole, in a pretty good state of health.

And the gulls! I confess I was never weary of following the flight of these lovely birds, with their wings of brown velvet, edged with ermine. We do not tarry long in Algoa Bay, for it is our business to call again on the return journey to the Cape, but the afternoon is far advanced before we lift our anchor from the ground, and, as we slowly steam out to sea, bowing with majestic motion to the smooth, round-backed swell that comes lifting to close under the hawse-pipes, I stand

watching the town of Port Elizabeth slowly darkening, with its higher roofs outlined in ebony against a sky crimson with sunset and looking as though it throbbed and waved in folds of rose and gold with the ardency of the palpitating orb hidden behind the mountain ranges beyond.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TO EAST LONDON.

THE night came down dark with tropical suddenness; a deeper shadow yet gathered over the land, and presently there was an amazing display of lightning. Flashes of delicate violet, of a sun-bright yellow tinge, of an emerald green, darted like hurled lances from out the bodies of dense vapour and sparkled rich in the smooth sea, in the midst of which the share of our keel was rending a line of liquid light. There was no thunder, but the lightning was continuous, with something even of awful beauty in its incessant play and in the variety of its magnificent colours. Now and again a large space of sky would open with a flash of splendour surpassing the noontide effulgence of the day, and you seemed to peer through this aperture into the very glory of heaven itself. Occasionally there would be a sparking out of half a dozen white flashes at once, and the brow of the mountains stood black to the dazzle; and then it was for all the world like a discharge of giant artillery, though the illusion ceased with the flashes, as no uproar of thunder followed.

But, travelling at the rate of thirteen nautical miles an hour, a ship soon speeds out of one kind of weather into another, and some while before it was time to go to bed we had sunk the storm clouds and their levin-brands below the horizon; the stars were shining in their myriads in the velvet-like gloom on high, and by staring earnestly away on the port beam you could just make out the shadow of the land with a red tinge or two upon it where the bush or the grass was burning.

When the morning came, the daylight showed us the now-familiar picture of a glistening sandy foreshore, backed by mountains which, from the excessive rarefication of the atmosphere, gathered an aspect of Andean altitude. The desolation of the coast grew unpleasantly oppressive as one leaned over the side watching it. Old narratives of shipwreck came into my head, and I was now able to realize the misery of sailors and passengers cast away upon this shore with a sharpness not to be got from the perusal of books. A little higher up there occurred in 1782 probably the most memorable wreck—that of the *Grosvenor*, East Indiaman—to be found in the maritime annals. She was bound from Ceylon, and, the position of this coast being in those days erroneously marked on the chart, she went ashore during tolerably heavy weather, and, after a little, broke in two. The story is much too well known to bear re-telling here. The peculiar interest it has is largely owing to the tale of some of the female passengers having been carried off by the natives and made wives of, and by their offspring, so it is declared, existing in the shape of a yellow race, who are remarkable for their cunning, cowardice, and ferocity.* There

* "There is an old rumour that on board the *Grosvenor* were General or Colonel Campbell and two daughters. These daughters are said to

is a curious note on this subject in a history of the Colony, dated about 1840, that I was looking at one day in the library at Cape Town. The passage is worth transcribing.

"There are," says this historian, "in the vicinity of Port Natal, and probably in the interior, tribes of yellow men, with long reddish beards and flowing hair, descendants of shipwrecked Europeans. On the 4th of August, 1782, the Honourable East India Company's ship *Grosvenor* was wrecked on the coast of Natal, but a few of her people were able to reach the then Dutch colony at the Cape, where they reported that many of their friends had been left alive among the natives. The Dutch Government sent a party to search for them, but they only penetrated as far as one of the Kei River branches. At the request of the British Government another search was made in 1790. This expedition was under the command of Jacobus van Renen, who discovered a village in which were people who were manifestly descended from whites. There were three old women amongst them, who had been shipwrecked when children, and who had been taken as wives by Oemtonone, the chief of the Hambonas, or yellow-coloured men. They proved to be sisters, but being very young at the time of the wreck, they could not say to what nation they belonged. The remains of the

have been made wives of by the natives, and it is declared that when their friends found them out they refused to leave from feelings of shame. Certain it is that near the Umgazi river are living a small clan of light-coloured Kaffirs, many of whom are supposed to be the descendants of the unfortunate passengers and crew of this ill-fated ship" (*Natal Mercury*). The dates given render it impossible that these yellow people originated with survivors of the *Grosvenor*. The "old women" must have been the result of a wreck very long antecedent to that of the East Indiaman.

Grosvenor were seen by Van Renen's party, and at the time of the expedition the descendants of the white people numbered four hundred. The old women seemed much pleased at first by Mr. van Renen's offer to restore them to people of their own colour, but on his return from the wreck they refused to leave their children and grandchildren and the country in which they had so long resided, where it must also be observed they were treated as beings of a superior race. It appears," continues the historian, " that this tribe of mulattoes have been driven from their settlement in Hambona by the Zulus, who have invaded that country. Mr. Thomson, in his interesting journey to Latakoo, says that yellow men, with long hair, who were described as cannibals, were amongst the invading hordes who were then scouring the country, devastating all before them like a flight of locusts. The unfortunate Lieutenant Farewell, when residing at Natal, had pointed out to him one of these yellow men amongst the king's suite, who was described as a cannibal. The yellow man shrunk abashed from Lieutenant Farewell. There can be no doubt that these descendants of Europeans and Africans are now widely ramifying their offspring throughout the country, and their services might be turned to good account in civilizing the native tribes." Thus the historian—and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of his conjecture touching the origin of the yellow race, though that origin must not be sought among the survivors of the *Grosvenor;* but if these people have the principles and qualities I am told they possess, it is certain we must seek elsewhere for a civilizing influence for the native tribes.

It is worth stating that after the lapse of a hundred and four years a gentleman named Turner, who resides

at the entrance of the Umkwani River, Pondoland, which is close to the spot where the *Grosvenor* was wrecked, has given notice of a light to be exhibited at that place from the date of the notice, viz., Oct. 14, 1885. Thus by degrees do the Colonials of South Africa illustrate their theory of progress.*

The coast improves as you approach East London, and the scenery round about the port itself is rendered not a little pleasing, after the monotonous glare of sand, by dense masses of vegetation crowning the ridges and coming low to where the high breakers flash up in foam. Yet the one feature of sand is everywhere visible, too. You see spaces of it gleaming white amidst the dense growths; and the treeless and shrubless line of it may be tracked through wood and bush, as though it were the withering and blighting slime left in the trail of some deadly leviathan serpent. The wonder is, seeing how the soil appears to be formed of sand, that this land should yield any sort of vegetation. But yet more wonderful is it to me, when I look at this coast, always melancholy and even forbidding in spite of its spaces of verdure and of the beautiful heavens which glow over it and of the grandeur of the deep blue sea which thunders in snow upon its unechoing strand, that any sort or condition of men should have thought it, to quote Jairing's Waiter, "worth while" to build a town upon

* Some remains of the *Grosvenor* were discovered two or three years ago. They comprised, among other things, gold, silver, and copper coins cemented into oxidized iron, the vessel having been ballasted with pig-iron. Above high water mark were found large piles of charcoal and remains of fires, where the Kaffirs had burnt the wreckage to extract the bolts, etc. Nine of the cannon carried by the *Grosvenor*, together with portions of the iron ballast were lying among the rocks. There is a tradition that a box of treasure is buried near the spot where the ship was lost. A very full account of this wreck may be found in "The Mariner's Chronicle," by Archibald Duncan, published in 1804.

it. Such as the town is, only a small portion of it is visible from the roadstead. You see a handful of houses of a somewhat hard and granite-like complexion standing beyond the massive breakwater with its fortress-like head. A few roofs of the little suburb or district of Panmure appear over the brow of the hill. A short distance inland you catch sight of some pretty little homesteads, whilst on the near foreground upon such herbage as grows on these African pastures you see tents of various sizes and shapes judged by me to represent picnic parties from the interior, until a gentleman, well-acquainted with the place, said that he did not like to see so many tents; he was afraid they meant something more than mere pleasuring; in other words, that the people in them had been forced by the general depression into coming down here and living cheaply under canvas.

One extraordinary contrast I noticed; just past a ridge was the roof of a large travelling circus, with a bright flag flying from a little pole on top of it; and directly in a line with this circus there lay on the beach the black wreck of a ship of probably a thousand tons. Such a typification of extremes is not often encountered; I mean the profoundly desolate and tragical suggestions of this stranded hulk exhibiting with ugly clearness its bruised and battered bones, topped by an object in a peculiar degree expressive of light-hearted merriment and gay vitality. But this is not the only wreck. The curve of the coast is literally strewn with broken fabrics and fragments of vessels. There is a notion here that when an owner wants to lose his ship he will send her to one of these roadsteads—to Durban, East London, or Mossel Bay. Nothing is needed but defective ground-tackle, I was told.

"But is the captain willing to risk his life?" said I.

"Oh," was the answer, "he knows all about it, and is usually ashore when the vessel parts."

The river has a bar, as I believe all African rivers have, and a very menacing object I thought it looked as I stood watching the swell boiling upon it. There was indeed a strong heave in the sea, though there was little wind and the weather was very fine. The weight that the mighty Southern Ocean puts into its lightest swell you felt in the rolling of the ship; yet for all that I gazed with surprise at the great upheavals of foam against the head and around the sides of the breakwater and upon the bar. It was impossible to find justification for such a display of wrath, not only there but along the shore in the folds which came lifting out of the blue of the great deep. What sort of spectacle this roadstead must present during one of those savage south-westers which blow here I could only surmise by observing the character of the combers which fell in shocks and in high spurtings of white against the breakwater and coast on a placid summer day, when the movement of the sea was little more than a light swell. I was told that from January, 1881, to February, 1886, eleven sailing vessels, representing 4,457 tons, have been lost off East London, and thirty-one hands drowned. This seems to be belied by the number of wrecks, the remains of which form a decidedly ghastly feature of this part of the coast. But then, to be sure, many of these stranded craft may now be old relics of disaster. The loss of life, that is to say the drowning of the thirty-one men, happened on July 25, 1881, when three vessels were driven ashore in a south-west gale, and went to pieces before help could be rendered. The worst case was that of a small barque. The captain was ashore when the vessel parted, but his

son was on board. She struck directly opposite Bat's Cave, and was dashed to pieces within twenty minutes. I was informed that little can be done to improve the present arrangements. "There are powerful steam-tugs," I was told, "in the river, which often assist vessels in distress. Instances of well-found ships coming ashore are very rare indeed, for the holding ground is good and the worst wind is from the south-west, so that we are not a dead lee shore. The dangerous time is when the wind veers to the south, moderates but blows straight on shore, bringing with it a heavy swell raised by the weather outside."

"What do you export?" I asked.

"The usual South African staples—wool, ostrich feathers, skins, hides, and mohair. Lately we have been sending a native boxwood, of which there is a great abundance in the neighbourhood, to the London market. This boxwood, we believe, will speedily form an important item of trade. We also export gum in small quantities."

"Have you any railway facilities?"

"Yes; we are connected with King Williamstown, forty-two miles; Queenstown, one hundred and fifty-two miles; and Aliwal North,* two hundred and eighty miles. Other transport is managed by waggons drawn by sixteen oxen, each carrying about eight thousand pounds; these travel at the rate of twenty miles a day. We have post-carts for mails and passengers at regular intervals, which cover about eighty miles a day."

"Your bar there looks dangerous: is it so?"

"To a very small extent only, owing to the breakwater. No lives have been lost since November, 1882,

* A town on the Orange river.

when two lighters were capsized and some of their crew drowned."

"What sort of climate have you?"

"Well, on the whole, we have a very pleasant climate. December, January, and February are, of course, our hot months, and then the heat is somewhat oppressive, but the wind comes strong from the sea and keeps us sweet and healthy all the year round."

So much for this strange little seaport, built on either side a river rich in scenery and startling a new-comer by its existence amid a desolation more absolute than the poet Cowper makes Alexander Selkirk lament.

Any youth desirous of going to sea should make a voyage to this roadstead and lie in it for about a fortnight, for here surely he would graduate to perfection in the matter of sea legs. The swell increased some six hours or so before we got our anchor up, and though I have outweathered a few stormy days in my time, I cannot recall the like of this tumblefication. I do not say that the rolling is worse off East London than it is off Durban, off Port Elizabeth, or in Mossel Bay. But two whites do not make a black, and it is not because the heaving is not worse here than it is in other roadsteads on this coast that it is not abominably bad all the same. The modern mail steamer, with her great length, narrow beam, and wall sides, possesses the art of wallowing in perfection. "They all roll," said an old captain to me, "and the one you're aboard of always seems to roll the worst of the whole blessed tribe." The *Spartan* is no exception, and had she carried square yards there were moments when I should have looked to see the yard-arms harpooning the swell. But then a line-of-battle ship of the old pattern, all beam, would roll in these roads to her anchor like an empty cask. The current

swings the ship into the hollow and off she goes like a pendulum. The engineer of the *Spartan*, a large, stout Scotchman, told me that, used as he was to this wallowing business, he could seldom get sleep of a night for being rolled out of his bunk. Out he would come as punctually as the ship heeled, and out I would come too with the same punctuality if I was caught napping by the swell with my grip of anything to hold on to relaxed. Off Durban I was told a transport during the Zulu war rolled so heavily that she killed half the troopers' horses in her, and the surrounding ships watched her people dropping the dead brutes overboard. To save the rest of the animals she had to put to sea and meet the swell head on. The next morning when she was looked for she was perceived hull down on the horizon. A mail steamer lying off East London rolled so fearfully that the lady passengers became hysterical, and the captain, to silence their shrieks and soothe their terrors, had to do what the transport did—shove out to sea and find a quieter motion with his anchor stowed. After the passage to the Cape, with its smooth waters, lovely skies, and balmy breezes, the coastwise voyage is like a Cape Horn experience in June, without the ice. It is a thing not to be recommended to invalids or to nervous people.

But, happily, the interior may be penetrated without the obligation of skirting the coast. Cape Town being reached, the whole climatic area of South Africa is accessible by rail, post-cart, or waggon. I remember, after leaving East London, talking to a medical man of considerable colonial experience upon the benefit offered to sufferers by a residence in South Africa. It was a lovely afternoon. The water was of a deep blue, with a gentle swell, polished as molten glass. Under the

quarter-deck awning many passengers lounged indolently, reading or conversing, and some of them sleeping. There was a cool air caused by the vessel's progress that sweetly fanned the burning cheek. Through the blue atmosphere you saw the coast—high mountains behind and a foreshore of sandhills, yet covered, apparently, with plenty of rich vegetation—looming or gleaming out in yellow, or slate, or green, with sulphur-coloured clouds hanging over it in places along with the pale smoke of bush fires. On our starboard bow the Indian Ocean swung in folds to a horizon faint in the fiery atmosphere—

> "As when to them who sail
> Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
> Mosambic, off at sea north-east winds blow
> Sabæan odour from the spicy shore
> Of Araby the blest; with such delay
> Well pleas'd, they slack their course, and many a league,
> Cheer'd with the grateful smell, old Ocean smiles."

The air was delicious for softness and sweetness, and that indescribable quality of buoyancy which the ocean puts into its breezes. One noticed the effect of it upon a young lady ill with consumption. She seemed to brisken and brighten to every respiration, and it was the seeing this that caused me to speak to the medical gentleman I have referred to and ask him to tell me anything about the climate of South Africa likely to be of interest and of use to the thousands who are suffering at home from the one great pest and scourge of Great Britain—phthisis.

"Well," he exclaimed, "I have had experience covering a good many years now, and my deliberate opinion is that there is no climate in the world comparable with that of South Africa for the treatment of consumption. There is not a town in the colony in

which you will not find a number of persons who originally came out at a time when the disease had such a grip of them as to render them the despair of their medical advisers. These persons must certainly have died in England. Let me give you one out of many remarkable instances. Twenty-seven years ago a gentleman, now a well-known and opulent merchant in Port Elizabeth, left Scotland for this colony for the sake of his brother, who was fast dying from consumption. That brother is not only now alive, but is living at this moment in Glasgow so perfectly recovered by this climate that for the last ten years he has not known an hour's pain or illness."

"I am bound to say," I exclaimed, "that I have heard of many similar instances."

"The reason why this climate," he continued, "is so wonderfully curative in its influence upon consumption, is extremely easy to understand. Except at the coast ports it is extraordinarily dry, and next it is greatly elevated above the sea level. South Africa is, in fact, a series of tablelands. There are three distinct elevations before the plains of the Free State are reached."

"Are there any specially good places for consumptives?"

"Almost any part of the colony up country is good; but the Cradock plateau, the country about Beaufort West, Ceres, Grahamstown, and Hanover within the colony are the places to which I should recommend invalids. The best place of all, however, is, in my opinion, the Free State—either Boshof or Bloemfontein. The air is really a wonder for clearness, sweetness, and crispness."

"You fully believe in the South African climate?"

"I do, fully, from the bottom of my heart—for consumption of course. In the voyage out you will find the best physic in the world for many other complaints."

"But," said I, "unfortunately your hotels are bad; you have many natural springs of great virtue, but the bathing accommodation is crude, rough, and would be thought insufferable by people accustomed to the spas of Europe. Added to this, when the railway journey comes to an end, and many more miles have to be measured, the roads are, as a rule, so abominable, the means of locomotion so wretchedly primitive, and the inconvenience in many other respects so great that it seems almost cruel to recommend patients to come here."

"Well," he answered, "what you say about the hotels is perfectly true; but let this colony be visited as the South of Europe is, or Madeira, and you would soon find the people going to work to correct the crudities and inconveniences you speak of. In what you say about locomotion you scarcely do us justice. I admit that formerly the difficulty of travelling up country was so great as to offer a really insuperable objection to the visits of patients to South Africa. But now you have a railway that conveys passengers from Cape Town or Port Elizabeth to Kimberley in Pullman cars. And, being at Kimberley, you have Boshof within thirty miles of you and Bloemfontein within seventy. The lack of hotel and boarding-house accommodation is unquestionably a serious drawback. But some little movement—I believe in the right direction—is being made at Boshof and Bloemfontein by the medical men there receiving patients into their homes."

"Well, sir," I exclaimed, "if I could save but one life by inducing a single sufferer to visit the colony upon my

recommendation I should feel I had not passed through existence without doing some good. What month ought to be chosen for leaving England?"

"October certainly, so as to escape the November cold; this brings you to the Cape in the early summer, and you may linger in the suburbs of Cape Town for at least a month if you please. My advice, however, would be for a patient to proceed up country at once; it is certainly his business to make haste to go where he is likely to recover."

The judgment I have deliberately arrived at after making many inquiries, talking with many persons, and looking about me for myself is that consumptive persons ought not to despair until they have given South Africa a trial. I have spoken very candidly of the discomforts and inconveniences of travel in these parts—all of which are, in my opinion, due to the reckless neglect of the Colonials, to that spirit of indolence which is the most distinctive of all the features of South African life, and which is at the very bottom of the reason why South Africa is so much behind in the Colonial race that she is almost out of it. But life is precious, and health is a goddess that inhabits the rocks and the mountain top, as well as the verdant and flowery plain easy of access and sweet to walk in. She is surely worth seeking, and if she is to be found on the plateaux of the southernmost portions of the Dark Continent, she should be sought there with as little reference as possible to the hindrances with which Colonial laziness suffers the road to her to remain encumbered. Here am I, leaning over the rail of an ocean steamer, waiting for the lighthouse at Durban to heave into view; and as I taste the unspeakable sweetness of the ocean aromas in the wind, and as I watch the distant mountains raising their azure

heights to the soft, bronzed clouds, and as I witness the glory of the blue of the sky and feel the influence of the high sun raining his white light in such a dazzle as the eye never beholds in England, I cannot but feel that the verdurous districts beyond those dim heights there must by reason of the enormous choice of climatic area they offer be full of life-giving properties and of golden promise to many a grieving and languishing invalid who has visited other places in search of health and knows not now whither to direct his steps.

CHAPTER XIX.

SHIPWRECK: ITS TRAGEDIES AND COMEDIES.

WHILST talking with Mr. Martyr, the chief officer of the *Spartan*, about the loss of the *Grosvenor* and of the wrecks which lay along the East London coast, he told me a curious story. He was second mate of the *European*, a steamer that was lost some years ago off Ushant. The vessel when she struck was homeward bound from the Cape. One of the passengers had asked Mr. Martyr to put a packet of diamonds belonging to him in the mail-room, and this was done. Finding the vessel to be sinking, the captain ordered the second mate to get up the bags containing the mails. As he was going below for that purpose the owner of the diamonds implored him to bring his parcel up along with the bags. Mr. Martyr descended at the risk of his life—he graphically described his feelings as he heard the cascading sounds of water rushing into the mail-room!—passed up the

bags, seized the parcel and gave it to its owner, who rushed into his cabin, put the parcel down in his bunk whilst he slipped on a great coat, and then bolted on deck—leaving the parcel behind him!

I have often thought that incidents of shipwreck—or what might more fitly be termed the curiosities of marine disaster—would form an entertaining and instructive volume. In the narrative of the loss of the *Kent*, published in 1825, there is a passage the truth of which has been confirmed by nearly every shipwreck that has taken place. "Instead"—says the author, speaking of the behaviour of the people on board that doomed ship—"instead of being able to trace amongst my numerous associates that diversity of fortitude which I should have expected, *a priori*, would mark their conduct—forming, as it were, a descending series, from the decided heroism exhibited by some, down to the lowest degree of pusillanimity and frenzy discoverable in others—I remarked that the mental condition of my fellow-sufferers was rather divided by a broad, but, as it afterwards appeared, not impassable line, on the one side of which were ranged all whose minds were greatly elevated by the excitement above their ordinary standard; and, on the other was to be seen the incalculably smaller, but more conspicuous group, whose powers of acting and thinking became absolutely paralyzed, or were driven into delirium by the unusual character and pressure of the danger." The history of shipwreck shows that after the first panic human nature settles down into a sort of level. Of course, time must be allowed. Let a cry of "Fire!" be raised; let a captain in a gale of wind with the sails in rags, the topmasts overboard, and the water washing up to the hatchways, put on a long face, roll up his eyes, and exclaim, "Lord deliver us! we are

all lost!" and a hundred marvellous exhibitions of courage and cowardice, of resignation and despair, will be witnessed; but as the fire does not rapidly encroach, as the ship continues to float, as, in short, the mind finds leisure to witness the situation, to realize whatever the chances may be, a kind of uniformity of behaviour will prevail. The coward ceases to moan and weep, the brave man breaks from the iron bonds of his will and forsakes his posture of heroic stubbornness for a bearing that denotes a hungering after life, a passionate desire to create or to grasp opportunities. Many varieties of moods are merged, until the inevitable moment arrives, when once again panic will work like madness, only very often in those natures which time and contemplation of the peril have transformed; so that it may happen that he who showed a craven heart at the beginning goes to his grave without sign of agitation, whilst the man who promised a heroical death encounters his fate when it comes with a terror which gives to the recollection of the survivors the darkest colour to the whole miserable picture.

In this same little volume on the loss of the old East Indiaman by fire in the Bay of Biscay there are several striking instances of individual conduct. For example, when it was seen that the fire was gaining fast, and whilst several hundreds of barely clothed people were rushing about the decks in quest of husbands, children, or parents, several old soldiers and sailors giving up all hope, but without making any fuss, went and sullenly seated themselves directly over the magazine, where for some time they remained with folded arms and wooden faces waiting for the powder to catch, so that there might be an end at once to their sufferings. It is difficult to recall the picture of the flaming ship, rolling heavily

upon the high sea, and rushing forwards like some maddened thing of instinct, without finding a prominent and striking feature of the wild scene in those old soldiers and sailors, sitting in a group upon that part of the deck immediately above the magazine, waiting and yearning for the explosion. Think of the lifetime of feeling crowded into those moments; think of the expressions those stubborn, storm-beaten faces would wear, and the look in their eyes, glistening red as they turned them upon the people rushing past, crying and wringing their hands as they sped hither and thither! *

There is another touch in this same little book that moves one to read, as though the thing it tells of happened yesterday. "I was much affected," says the writer, "with the appearance and conduct of some of the dear children, who, quite unconscious in the cuddy cabins of the perils that surrounded them, continued to play as usual with their little toys in bed, or to put the most innocent and unseasonable questions to those around them." It is where the calmness is supreme that the pathos is deepest, as we find it, for instance, in that figure of a young military officer, with his face full of

* I am reminded here of some stirring stanzas by Mr. Gerald Massey—

"Lord! how they shame the life we lead,
These sailors of our sea-girt isle,
Who cheerily take what Thou may give
And go down with a heavenward smile!

"The men who sow their lives to yield
A glorious crop in lives to be;
Who turn to England's harvest-field
Th' unfruitful furrows of the sea.

"With such a breed of men so brave,
The Old Land has not had her day:
But long her strength, with crested wave,
Shall ride the seas the proud old way."

tranquil thought, taking a lock of hair from his writing-case, and placing it in his breast over his heart.

A very different object is that old pig-tailed fellow whom John Byron wrote about in his description of the loss of the *Wager*. "One man in particular," says he, "in the ravings of despair, was seen stalking about the deck, flourishing a cutlass over his head, calling himself king of the country, and striking every person he came near, till his companions, finding no other security against his tyranny, knocked him down." It was not many of the old Jacks who so acted. Daniel Monro, of the frigate *La Tribune*, that was wrecked off Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1797, furnishes a lively illustration of the curiosities of shipwreck. The hull of the ship was under water; the dead were floating about in all directions; the foremast stood, and Daniel Monro was fortunate enough to gain the top, that is, the platform, in those days circular, fitted below the head of the lower-mast. He disappeared suddenly, and a sailor named Dunlop, who was in the top, supposed that he had let go and was washed away. Two hours elapsed, at the expiration of which time Dunlop was amazed to see Daniel's head rising through the lubber's hole. When asked where he had been, he replied that, not finding the top comfortable, he had dropped overboard and cruised about for a better berth, but not meeting with anything to suit him, though he had swam about the wreck for a considerable time, and overhauled her thoroughly, he had returned to the fore-shrouds, climbed into the cat-harpings under the top, and slept there for an hour. "He appeared," says the narrative, "greatly refreshed."

Among the curiosities of shipwreck I should like to rank the confusion caused by live stock—particularly

pigs. I remember once being in a ship in a violent gale off an Australian headland. A great sea tumbled on board abaft the fore-rigging, swept everything aft, and stove in the cuddy front. Amongst the wreckage floating and washing about in that cabin were several pigs, which had been dashed from their moorings under the longboat, and their squeaks, grunts, and yells made the distraction of that moment absolutely horrible. In the wreck of a steamer, named the *Killarney*, many years ago, the first efforts of the men were directed to throwing a deck cargo of upwards of four hundred pigs overboard to lighten the vessel. For several hours the sailors were chasing the animals, "but," says the narrative, "overboard it was impossible to get the pigs. They clung to the vessel as if they were destined to be her destruction." A more terribly lively scene it would be impossible to imagine; four hundred pigs racing, squealing, and sliding about the decks, the sailors catching hold of them, tumbling down with them, rolling into the scuppers with them, whilst the seas break over the steamer continuously, and every moment brings her nearer to her end!

In the account of the loss of the *Pegasus* there is a curious incident. An open boat was encountered. She was full to the gunwales, and in her was a man seated up to his breast in the water. He was found utterly insensible, with the death film upon his eyes, but, on being taken on board and warmed, he revived. The first words he uttered were, "How are the fires?" The poor fellow had worked in the engine-room of the *Pegasus*.

These pauses of memory are amongst the wonders of human suffering. Coincidences, too—and some of them very startling—may be found plentifully scattered among the marine records. In the wreck of the *Clarendon*, the second mate, named Harris, was swept overboard, and

struggled to gain the land. A man, named Wheeler, seeing the poor fellow battling among the breakers, rushed in and dragged him clear of the surf. "In the features of the reviving mariner," says the account, "his deliverer recognized an old shipmate whose life he had saved four years before." Another coincidence. A small West Indiaman was wrecked just off the Isle of Wight. Among the passengers were a Mrs. Shore, the wife of an army lieutenant, and several children. Mrs. Shore's brother, Captain Smith, lived at Newport. He had recently lost his wife, and was eagerly awaiting the arrival of his sister and nieces. A friend met him, and asked if he had heard the dreadful news from the back of the island. "No," said he. "What is it?" "An Indiaman has stranded." Captain Smith, on hearing this, went to the Blackgang Chine, and saw the vessel. He had little need to make inquiries, for soon after his arrival his sister's body was washed ashore, and those of his nieces soon followed.*

In the wreck of the *St. James* there is an incident that rivals in pathos the most moving of those which Lord Byron selected as colours for his famous picture in "Don Juan." The pinnace was overcrowded. It was necessary that several persons should be thrown overboard. A man was seized, but his younger brother demanded a moment's delay. He said that his brother was skilful in his calling, that his father and mother were very old, and his sisters not yet settled in life. He added that he could not be of such service to them as his brother, and therefore begged to die instead. The

* The *Violet*, that was lost many years ago, whilst crossing from Ostend to Dover, supplies another instance. Her master was a native of Harwich, and his body was washed up close to that town. The conflicting character of the tides puts an element of mystery and superstition into this coming home of the poor drowned seaman.

person in charge consented, and the lad was thrown into the sea. He was a fine swimmer, and for six hours he followed the boat, struggling to regain her, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other. The people kept him off with their swords. Eventually the young fellow snatched at a blade and held it in defiance of the wounds it caused, nor could the man who grasped it shake his hold off. His determination saved his life, for the others, affected by his resolution and courage, and by remembrance of the noble brotherly love that had brought him to this pass, agreed to take him into the boat.

The behaviour of seamen at a time when they have utterly abandoned hope furnishes much that is curious to the literature of shipwreck. In some cases you read of men turning into their hammocks, and begging their shipmates to lash them up. Others strip themselves, and wait for the plunge. It has always been a peculiarity of sailors in a large proportion of every ship's company in a time when there are no more chances left, and when the end seems to have certainly arrived, to put on clean shirts and their best clothes. A seaman once told me that, being on board a vessel that was fast sinking, he jumped below into the forecastle, overhauled his chest, and put on nearly all the clothes which were in it. I remember his telling me of three shirts, two waistcoats, two pairs of trousers, with much underclothing, all of which he wore. I asked him what his object was in burdening himself with all these clothes at such a time. "Well," said he, "I've a taste for dying with plenty of clothes on, and consider it's proper a man should go to his account with a clean shirt, and dressed in his best. If there had been time I should have shaved myself." It is no doubt superstition in the sailor that makes him eager to perish in his best things. He might desire,

perhaps, that his body should present a respectable appearance if picked up, but I also fancy that there is some sort of feeling in him that, since he is about to be called before his Maker, he ought to present himself in his most shipshape trim. Some such notions I know used to exist, but the mariner of to-day, if not too learned, is undoubtedly too prosaic for such rude, yet not unlovely fancies.

Superstition in shipwreck has on many occasions been found a useful quality. The crew of an American ship, named the *Hercules*, were saved by the superstitions of the Lascars on board. The tempest raged, and the vessel was slowly filling. A Lascar came up to the captain with a handkerchief in his hand. "What do you want?" said the captain. "This handkerchief," replied the Lascar, "contains some rice, and all the rupees I possess. If you will let me lash it aloft we shall all be saved." The captain consented, the Lascar sprang into the rigging, and secured the handkerchief to the mast-head. Whereupon all the other Lascars were immediately transported with joy. They embraced their virtuous companion, we read, and then laboured at the pumps with as much alacrity and perseverance as if they had encountered before neither apprehension nor fatigue.

A noble example of the sort of pluck that enters into the composition of our English sailors is related in the narrative of the loss of an East India Company's ship in 1782. The vessel was sinking; all the boats but one were lost. This one boat eight men jumped into and rowed away with, leaving their shipmates to perish. The sailors who were left shouted to these fellows to return—not, they said, to carry off any more of the crew, but simply to rescue two little children, who could add

no weight to the boat. The seamen returned, took the infants, and again rowed away. Not a man on board the sinking ship made the least attempt to leap into the boat. Ten minutes after the vessel foundered, and every soul on board was drowned. It would be difficult to find anything in naval story to surpass the beautiful heroism, the marvellous self-devotion of this act. It is an old tale, but to this day the heart throbs with a quicker beat to the thought of those seamen, handing the two little infants into the boat, whilst under their feet they feel the fabric settling deeper and deeper every moment, and know that ere that boat has measured a mile they will be corpses. It is one more illustration of the merchant sailor's spirit.

It is a curiosity of shipwreck that Eliot Warburton, who wrote, "Since the days of steam navigation the Bay of Biscay is no longer formidable," should have perished in that same bay by the burning of the *Amazon*.* I have somewhere read that when this accomplished man and delightful author was last seen, he was observed with folded arms surveying, with an expression as of mild curiosity only, the dreadful scene of blazing hull and terrified people. How persons will act in panic is

* Whence comes the evil reputation of the Bay of Biscay? Much of it is owing, no doubt, to the old song, "Loud roar'd the dreadful thunder," etc. It is certain that wherever there be wind at sea there will be billows, and the seas of the Bay are certainly not heavier than the seas in any other part of the storm-vexed deep: never in any case so fierce as the surges of the Horn or of the Southern Ocean. One reason of its ill-fame is, it is the first step, so to speak, in an ocean voyage from home, and the experiences being often rude are remembered with the vividness of first impressions. Again, a great number of ill-built and over-loaded and under-manned vessels are constantly passing through the Bay to the Mediterranean. Numbers founder in these waters, and the Bay in the Wreck Chart is covered with marks denoting casualties of many kinds.

illustrated in this wreck to a degree beyond most other records. Think of a man and his wife with their arms entwined walking quietly to an open hatch, and deliberately leaping into the body of fire in the hold! Modesty, too, is found so strained that a young lady, whose attire was partially burnt off her, found death preferable in a burning ship to sitting imperfectly clad in a boat with a company of sailors and passengers! The story of the *Amazon* supplies another coincidence. Her master was Captain Symonds, and some time after his vessel was burnt, a piece of the wreck much charred, with a string of a female's cap attached to it, was washed up close to the house in which Symonds was born.

The ruling passion shows strong in death by shipwreck. It is often beautiful, often exquisitely moving, often so humorous as to neutralize all horror, and to furnish little more than laughter to the tragedy. Take the case of the *Montreal*, burnt off Quebec. A mother had been thrown into the water with her children. With one hand she clung to a rope, with the other she kept the head of a child above water, and with her teeth fastened to its dress she sustained a second child. There were people screaming for help all around her, and boats were picking them up. This devoted mother could not scream, and she must have been drowned in a few moments had not her situation been noticed. Another illustration of maternal love is found in the wreck of the *Queen Victoria*. There was a deck passenger named O'Brien, a discharged soldier. He saw a woman with a child in her arms, and offered to take the child that she might be free to help herself. He seized the baby and placed it on his shoulder. The mother's love proved too strong. She looked on idly a moment, then passionately snatched the child back to her.

O'Brien swam ashore, but the mother and child were drowned.

When the *London* was sinking, one of the sailors was noticed upon his knees groping about in a foot depth of water. He was asked what he sought. He replied that he had let fall a sovereign from his mouth. The person who told the story said: "He was as cool and eager in looking for it as a street boy would be for a sixpence he had seen fall." An old man was observed to strap up a railway rug. It was supposed he had concealed some hundreds of sovereigns in it.

Another instance of ruling passion is an inversion. The passion is on the other side, and a very ugly picture it makes. I refer to the loss of the *Prince George*, a man-of-war commanded by Admiral Broderick. She took fire and burnt furiously. There were a number of merchant vessels in the neighbourhood, but, as her guns were 'shotted, they refused to approach and help the sufferers. At last she blew up. The sea was covered with swimming and drowning men, and with a quantity of wreckage. There being no more danger, the merchantmen lowered their boats, but, instead of rescuing the drowning man-of-war's men, they restricted their humanity to giving chase to the geese and ducks, which had formed a portion of the live stock of the *Prince George*, and in picking up the chairs and tables, and whatever else floated near them. We might hope, in the interests of mercantile Jack, that these rascals were foreigners, who had been shipped into English forecastles. Yet shipwreck often shows that, whatever may be the colour of the skin, the heart is the same that beats inside it. There is a fine story of an Englishman and his wife leaving the ship in which they were making a voyage to pay a visit to the admiral. A negro servant

on board the vessel they had temporarily quitted was in charge of their two children. A storm arose. The vessel, straining at her anchors, sprung a leak, and she settled fast. There were no boats; the admiral sent one from his ship. The crew, panic-stricken, jumped into her, and the negro, finding there was only room for him alone or the two children, placed them in the boat, and went down a few moments afterwards in the vessel.

The curiosities of shipwreck are, indeed, abundant enough to fill many volumes. Good service might be rendered to literature, to humanity, and to the cause of the sailor by a collection of brief narratives having special reference to human behaviour under all circumstances of distress and of disaster at sea. There is, as I have said, a superabundance of incident, but the illustrations are scattered through hundreds of volumes. Bright and beautiful examples of the English spirit lie buried in old forgotten narratives. Yet such a collection would well repay the labour it must demand. It might form the foundations, indeed, of a literature of the sea, such as this great maritime nation yet wants; for something more should go to the formation of marine letters than a dry if accurate naval history or two and novels in which verisimilitude is the last quality deemed essential.

CHAPTER XX.

TO MOSSEL BAY.

THE bit of coast that makes the foreground of Durban is, on the whole, the prettiest picture the South African shore submits. As you round the lighthouse standing white upon a bold height called "The Bluff," and drop anchor in the roadstead, you see a very great deal to please and detain the eye. Suppose your ship to be lying with her head pointed towards the shore: Then you have on your left a high cliff, richly verdant with trees, the home, it is said, of innumerable monkeys. A fine lighthouse and signal-station on top show bravely against the sky. At the foot of this bluff there runs out into the sea a line of rocks, over which the swell of the Indian Ocean rolls its snow, filling the air for a wide space with a luminous mist of spray. Yet here again, among the trees on the Bluff, you see the now familiar tracts of pale yellow sand, and once more you wonder that a soil which must necessarily be rendered poor by the admixture of sand in great quantities should yield vegetation so abundant as you witness. Past the breakwater round to the right are flats, embellished with a row of red sheds. On a line with a long skeleton pier which, I believe, is being demolished bit by bit, as the material of which it is constructed happens to be required for other purposes, you see the masts and yards of ships lying in the lagoon harbour, at the entrance of which is the bar, roaring, flashing, throwing up its clouds of boiling spume, after the manner of most of these South African obstructions. Then you notice a long, low,

sandy foreshore, patched with vegetation and relieved by a few small houses. Behind this lies Durban, no distinctive portion of which is visible from the anchorage saving the tower of the new Town Hall and a little cluster of roofs round about it. In the distance are the hills dark with trees and bush, with here and there openings of a parched green appearance. Many houses stand upon these hills, and form a district called the Berea, the fashionable suburb, in which are to be found the homes of the merchants of Durban. Some of these houses are stately, many indeed elegant and beautiful; the roofs of them are of corrugated iron, the metallic glint of which as they shine out from amidst the vegetation in their own grounds contrasts curiously with the dusky greenery, and furnishes a novel characteristic. The land then trends away to the right in greens of several shades, but always clear and often vivid, and dies out in the far distance towards the waters of the Mozambique.*

* There is a curious picture of Natal written by Captain Rogers, and preserved in Dampier's "Voyages" (1699; vol. 2): "The country of Natal takes up about 3 d. and a half of Lat. from W. to S. It is bounded on the S. by a country inhabited by a small nation of savage people, called by our English Wild Bush-men; that live in caves and in holes of rocks, and have no other houses than such as are form'd by Nature. . . . At the mouth of the river is a Bar which has not above 10 or 11 foot water on it in a spring-tide; though within there is water enough. . . . Elephants are so plenty here that they feed together in great troops; 1000 or 1500 in a company." Speaking of the dress of the natives, Rogers says: "They have caps made of beef-tallow of about 9 or 10 inches high. They are a great while making these caps, for the tallow must be made very pure, before 'tis fit for this use. Besides, they lay on but a little at a time and mix it finely among the hair, and so it never afterwards comes off their heads. . . . They have no money in this country, but give cows in exchange for wives; and therefore he is the richest man that has most daughters or sisters; for to be sure he will get cattle enough. They make merry when they take their wives; but the bride cries all her wedding day."

Natal is perhaps the most promising and certainly the most determined colony in South Africa. The energy of its people is exhibited in the resolute manner in which the works of the port of Durban have been dealt with. The story of the Harbour Works is not a little curious in its way, and is certainly instructive. The difficulty here is the difficulty that is encountered elsewhere on this coast, namely, a bar of sand that prohibits vessels above a certain tonnage from penetrating into secure waters and obtaining the conveniences of docks and quays. In 1870, as I gather, Sir John Coode proposed a plan for deepening this bar that was estimated to cost £204,000. A question arising as to the capability of the colony to bear this expense, Sir John Coode recommended works which were to accomplish the end in view at a cost of about £20,000! Six years later a new design was submitted by Sir John that was calculated at £448,000. The Harbour Board is of opinion that this 1877 design could not have been carried out for half a million of money; indeed, it is alleged that, having regard to the heavy seas which the pier, implied in Sir John Coode's design, would have to withstand, the expenditure would be absolutely beyond calculation. To relate all the schemes and to quote all the estimated costs in regard to the deepening of this bar would only fatigue the reader. The conflict now waged was succinctly explained to me by Mr. Harry Escombe, a gentleman of intrepidity and sagacity in his efforts to serve the colony in the particular undertaking, at all events, of the improvement of Durban harbour.

"The fight," he said, "as regards our harbour works is whether they are to go on under a local board and a clever engineer who is engaged by us, or under the Crown agents and eminent engineers who are on their staff. I

am sorry to say that our experience of eminent engineers who reside at a distance is painful, and has proved most costly."

It certainly seems unfair to a colony that it should not be permitted to know its own interests, and that it should be forced into a heavy expenditure against the decisions of a concurrent judgment acquainted with local needs and local conditions to a degree hopelessly beyond the reach of Secretaries of State for the Colonies at home, or of eminent engineers who base their projects upon brief excursions and superficial inspections. It is the general wish here that the works should proceed under local guidance, and it is difficult to understand the meaning of the policy that opposes this desire. The Resident Engineer should be trusted. He is on the spot, sees everything that is happening, gains in a week more experience of the conditions to be fought against than could be obtained in a year by an engineer living at a distance and inspired by reports only, and is furthermore backed by the wishes of the colony. The sense of the obligation felt by the people of Natal to improve their harbour works, or at all events to persevere in their efforts after improvement, is rendered very intelligible by the trade of the port and the promise which the statistics are full of. In 1884, the tonnage of steamers brought into the harbour amounted to 18,216; of sailing vessels, 38,383. In 1885, the steam tonnage amounted to 20,235, and the sailing tonnage to 41,720. A return of the vessels arriving at Port Natal last year, including those remaining at outer anchorage, gives an aggregate in register tonnage of 212,017, exclusive of men-of-war amounting to 12,703 tons besides. No visitor to Durban but must wish the efforts devoted to the deepening of the bar all success.

There is constantly a movement in the roadstead, either a swell more or less heavy or the desperate surges of the south-east gale, and until passengers are able to cross the bar in the steamers which bring them off the port, and so land in comfort, they must be satisfied to endure the primitive and distracting arrrangement of the basket and the transfer of the little tender. People are now sent ashore in the following manner: A steam tender arrives alongside the ship; there is a large basket swung by the steam-winch; this basket is fitted with a door; a couple of persons step in and sit down, the door is closed, the signal is given, the steam-winch rattles, up goes the basket, and when over the side it is lowered on to the deck of the tender, and the occupants step out. The incessant rolling of the vessels forbids any other form of transhipment. But though there is not much danger in this basket business, the inconvenience of it is very great, and the terror inspired by it in nervous people quite alarming to witness. I saw a father and mother and three children squeeze in together into this basket. Our steamer was rolling heavily. At one moment the tender alongside looked as if she must be swung by the swell right on to our deck, whilst at the next moment we had rolled half our own length away from her, and she appeared dark in shadow in the deep liquid hollow under our leaning bilge. The moment the basket was swung the children began to scream; the mother joined in the shrieking; whilst the father swelled the chorus by passionate notes of entreaty to the sailors to be quick. But despatch was quite impossible. Opportunities had to be watched if this family of five, concealed within the poised basket, were not to be drowned or crushed; and for a long three minutes the screaming company of souls were kept dangling at the end of the

derrick whilst the sailors watched for a chance to safely lower them. As good an opportunity as was worth waiting for came. "Lower away handsomely!" was the cry. Plump dropped the basket to the deck of the tender upborne at this instant by the swell as if to meet it. The concussion must have been pretty violent; the door of the basket flew open, and out tumbled the family like marbles from a bag.

Even when the passengers are on board the tender, having safely passed the ugly and formidable ordeal of the basket, they may yet be said to have taken only the first step along the road of the difficulties presented here. As a rule, the bar is always boiling, always roaring, always raging; the tender must cross it, and, let her pick what particular passage she may, the rule is for her to be thrown on her beam-ends and to be smothered in foam to the height of her funnel. In consequence, passengers are usually sent into the cabin and battened down—a process they must either submit to or take their chance of being swept overboard. One may imagine the effect upon ladies of an imprisonment (without the remotest chance of escape in the event of capsizing) in the hold of a vessel of the size of a small smack, under water whilst washing across the bar, and reeling from side to side, with her funnel at moments almost horizontal! Small wonder if the people of Natal, a colony most conveniently accessible by sea, should discover a very considerable eagerness in their wish so to deepen the Durban bar as to enable the ocean steamers to moor in smooth water alongside their wharves and quays.

The tender employed in these transhipments is named the *Carnarvon*, and when she first approached I was struck by observing that she was furnished with two propellers, one right aft in the usual place, and one in

the forefoot under the bows. The object of this double arrangement is to provide that one propeller shall always be under water, for the swell is so heavy, the jumping on the bar so great, that the incessant skipping of the little steamer would render one propeller almost useless to her. A certain interest attached to this boat in my sight, through the circumstance of her having been brought out from England by Mr. H. C. Reynell, the second mate of the mail steamer I was then on board of. I discovered this by accident. Standing at the rail, and observing the heavy weather made by the little steamer as she crossed the bar and approached us, I turned to the second mate, who was looking at her close beside me, and asked him if he could tell me her tonnage.

"Fifty-six," he answered, smiling.

"No bigger?" I exclaimed; "are you sure of your figures?"

"I ought to know," he replied, "seeing that I navigated her to this coast from Southampton."

"It must have been a perilous journey," said I; and it was impossible not to think so when you considered the size of the little vessel and watched her jumping half her length out and rolling gunwale under upon the moderate movements of the water in this roadstead, and then reflected upon the sort of seas she might have had to encounter in the Bay of Biscay and off L'Agulhas. Mr. Reynell told me that when he brought the steamer out of Southampton she had a freeboard of 18 inches, her crew consisted of a mate, three able seamen, three firemen, two engineers, and a man who acted as cook and steward —eleven souls in all. The horse-power was twenty, the length over all ninety feet, and beam thirteen feet.

"Our actual steaming time," he said to me, "from Southampton to Cape Town was thirty-nine days twenty-

three hours; the whole passage, including eight days' detention, was forty-eight days. I left Southampton on the 5th of September, 1884, with fifty-six tons of coal on board in bags. The men were drunk when I started, which obliged me to bring up off Hurst Castle. Next morning, on getting under weigh, I found that the vessel steered very badly—indeed, she refused to answer her helm at all, and I was forced to keep the English coast close aboard in case of disaster. This trouble mended by-and-by, and, after being bothered a bit by a fog which half decided me to endeavour to make the Eddystone again, I set course for Madeira. We had a hurricane that night, and our steering gear carried away, but I had rigged up a screw for protection against the weather and this happily kept her head on. The worst part here was the sea-sickness; most of the crew were almost helpless with it, and I tell you, I felt very queer myself. Indeed, I can't imagine any kind of head or stomach capable of resisting the effects of the violently rapid rolling and tossing of the little vessel. Well, I will not weary you with particulars of the run, but one or two incidents may interest you. During the passage to St. Paul de Loando, a stretch of two thousand five hundred miles, the little vessel became so light through consumption of coal, that to obtain ballast I was obliged to save the ashes, wet them, stow them in bags, and lower them below. The compass was a very great difficulty; the card was continually flying about from one side to the other. After many experiments I lashed bags of rusty nails round it, and so contrived to keep it pretty steady. When loaded to her disc, the after-hold ports of the vessel were entirely under water. From my bunk I looked right under the surface, and in Loando Harbour it was like having an aquarium outside my port, as I could see many kinds of

fish darting to and fro. Going down the coast I could conjecture my soundings after a fashion, by observing through the port the different changes in the colour of the water. One day I was below working out observations when the engine suddenly stopped, then after a pause started off afresh with a rush. I jumped on deck, and was told by the mate that a huge sunfish had fouled the forward propeller. The monster lay on the surface astern. We went back to it with the idea of getting it on board, my notion being that we might be able to use a part of it as fuel. The first attempt carried away my derrick and gear, and it was not until we rigged the cat-davit with the chain cable that we managed to heave the great mass up. It proved of no use to us whatever; all that it did was to raise the biggest and worst smell I ever put my nose against. You may guess its size when I tell you that, on extracting one of the eyes and measuring it, I found it to be twenty-five inches in circumference. The whole fish weighed a ton, and we had to get rid of it by chopping it up and throwing it piecemeal overboard. On another occasion I was followed for some time by a shoal of huge black fish, like whales in appearance, and also in bulk and in their spouting and blowing arrangements. I reckon the stench of the sunfish attracted them, for they hung steadily in my wake, sometimes ranging close alongside, and one or another jumping up like the head of a mountain uphove by some volcanic action, and falling back again with a thunderous splash. Their presence rendered me very uneasy, for I felt that if one of them should take it into its head to get under the vessel and attempt a somersault our capsizal would be a thing to be cock-sure of. I had a rifle and fired at the biggest and shot him. He leapt half his length out of water, bleeding profusely; then

sounded and vanished, followed by the rest of them; and I was mighty glad to be rid of the shoal."

This was all Mr. Reynell had to tell me about the voyage; but looking, as I did whilst he talked, at the little vessel rolling, wallowing, and smothering herself with foam as she approached us, I could not but feel that a very great deal of pluck must have gone to his resolution to bring such a little ship as that from England to South Africa, and take his chance, with nothing to depend upon but a couple of propellers, of the weather which he might have to encounter in a passage of six thousand miles.

There is some merriment to be got out of the Kaffirs, Zulus, and other black men who work on the lighters which are towed to the ship either to bring or receive cargo. The heavy swell raises these large boats to the level of the bulwark-rail, then sinks them in the chasm under the ship; and the contortions, the cries, the grimacings, the wild leapings from side to side to escape the heavy swinging of the poised bales or packages form a sight to make one split one's sides with laughter. The costumes of these negroes help the diversion. Some of them have nothing on but a snuff-box and a spoon and fork in one, which they carry in the lobe of their ears, thrust through a split that yawns like their mouth. Others, with perhaps a slightly livelier perception of human requirements, will wrap a piece of sacking round their loins when they approach the ship; but it is only too manifest that any kind of clothing distresses these people. A lady told me that she had a Kaffir in her service and desired to make a footman of him; she bought a suit of clothes, and insisted upon his wearing them whilst he waited at table. No sooner, however, was his work for the day done than he would whip out of

his trousers and coat, and rush with a savage shout of joy into the grounds. The centuries of African tradition are decidedly obnoxious to the interests of the tailors and the dressmakers, and it is impossible to conjecture how many generations of black bishops and Ethiopian medical practitioners must come and go before a native public sentiment in favour of small clothes shall be created.

It was not a little disappointing to hear, whilst lying at Durban, that our ship during the homeward journey was to call at Mossel Bay to discharge two tons and a half of cargo, and receive a passenger, who proved to be an elderly German with a fixed smile and a prodigious appetite. I then thought and do still think it strange that the movements of a large mail steamer full of impatient people should be hindered by considerations so utterly trivial and so absolutely unremunerative. However, this undesirable deviation enabled me to grasp to the full one of the most malignant of the many dangers which beset this very formidable coast—I mean fog. I have seen some thick weather in my time, but, out of London, nothing comparable to the dense, wall-like, vaporous smother that veiled the land as we approached Mossel Bay. One element of danger was indeed lacking —there was nothing to fear from collision; but though there is no reason to suppose that our careful, groping captain was not fully acquainted with his whereabouts, yet you may conceive our feelings when, on the fog lifting, we perceived breakers whitening the sea on the port-bow, within a mile of us! So deceptive was the atmosphere rendered by the fog that, when the peaks of the mountains stole out and towered plain above the stratum of gleaming whiteness that hid the foreshore and the lower reaches, people who had steamed up and

down the coast scores of times could not tell the names of the ranges, nor imagine off what part of the coast we were lying with silent engines. There is no worse peril than that of fog at sea. It is deadly enough in waters plentifully navigated, such as the English Channel or the Bay of Biscay; but it can never, under any circumstances, be more dangerous than when it comes down like the night itself upon a ship close in to a coast bitterly deceptive, even when the sun is high and the land a brilliant outline. The frequent stopping of the engines, the gradual sobering down of the seething noise alongside, the hush along the decks, broken only by whispers or questions asked in a low voice, or by the startling and sudden booming yell of the steam horn, I am forced to confess put a strong element of fear into this part of our passage.

Few objects are nobler than mountains of great altitude towering above a dense mass of vapour. They look to be twice their actual height, and the magnification seems to project their pinnacle into the very heart of the heavens. The giant peak of the Cradockberg, a height of five thousand feet, as I was told, was presently determinable amidst the looming of the vast range. Here and there upon those distant brows lay a shining ray of sunlight, as of silver; and the power of the luminary presently making itself felt, the veil that hung in front of the coast towards which our head was pointed was rent, and, behold! Mossel Bay stood under our bows, with the houses slowly gleaming out to the filtering sunshine. 'Twas a strange picture to come upon, this revelation of seaboard and dwelling-place in a flaw of the fog, that yet hung in rolls and wreaths upon the land, whilst bringing the horizon of the sea astern to within a couple of cable-lengths of us.

It was a Sunday morning. We dropped anchor and blew several blasts upon the steam horn, the echoes of which you heard leaping from crag to crag, and dying away in a dull, moaning sound over the land. The picture of this bay will always have a prettiness of its own, thanks to its wooded tracts of soil, and to the quaint and nestling character of its habitations; but on this day the white coils and lines of vapour hanging about it added wonderfully to its character of what I must call romantic forlornness. Upon our port-beam the bluff of Cape St. Blaize, topped by a lighthouse, stood with dark outline upon the sea with a length of rock stretching from its point, covered with masses of foam, which filled the air as at Durban, and as at Port Elizabeth, with the glistening rain of spray. The hill sides give one the idea of the coast being formed of rubble. The houses stand behind and above one another; they are long-roofed, and many of them one-storied, furnished with the stereotype green verandah or stoep. The inevitable foreground of white sand has many growths of bush upon it. There is a granite-like hardness in the aspect of the buildings that makes you think of Penzance. Groups of old cottages come down to the very water's edge, and suggest a resemblance to the coastguards' huts of Dungeness and other low-lying shores. I cannot express the effect produced upon me by the profound sense of isolation this place inspired. The ideas of loneliness suggested by Port Elizabeth and by East London are impressive enough; but somehow Mossel Bay seems removed out of all possibility of touch of civilization to a degree assuredly not indicated by the appearance of the other towns. Yet again do I find myself wondering that human beings should have chosen such a spot as this for the erection of houses, and I am

still more astonished to think that, houses having been built here, men and women can be found willing to live in them and settle down to the desolateness of it all.

Having discharged our two tons and a half of cargo, and received a case or two of feathers and the German gentleman with the fixed smile, we hove up our anchor and steamed away down coast to Cape Town. The fog drew about us again; the mountain peaks melted into obscurity, and the steamer drove softly through sheer blankness with the lead going on either side, and the engines beating as slowly as the heart of a dying man. Cape Barracouta, Cape Agulhas, Danger Point, Cape Hanglip were invisible; but when approaching Table Bay the summit of the Cape of Good Hope emerged, the fog broke up, though hanging, nevertheless, in compacted shapes leagues long all about the sky and land, sometimes descending to the surface of the water right under our bows, and forcing us to seek our whereabouts in the leviathan heights of the coast past the Cape of Good Hope to Table Mountain. At last, when fairly abreast of Camp's Bay, the thickness vanished as if dispelled by the wave of some magic wand, and you saw it standing like a wall upon the sea astern. Some light fibrine lines of vapour with a sheen as of quicksilver upon them still clung to the brows of the mountains or sparkled like silver lace upon the hill sides; but the sun was over all, the waters of the bay were of a brilliant blue, the high combers upon the shore past Sea Point reared their green heights with curves of exquisite polish like the liquid rounding of the head of a cataract, and hid the rocks in acres of snow; a hundred stars flashed from the windows of the white houses ashore; in the far distance stood the grand and lovely peaks of the Hottentot Hollands mountains; many Malay fishing-boats were

running in from seawards, and their white canvas made the sapphire surface beautiful. It was a glorious picture indeed! The more enchanting with its splendour of light, its magnificence of varied hue, its grandeur of acclivity, its sweetness of distant prospect, for the melancholy, damp, oppressive vapour that had closed out the light and life of the ocean from us since our departure from Mossel Bay.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

THE departure from Cape Town of a mail steamer for England is evidently an incident of interest and excitement. I have noticed that whenever a demand is made upon the leisure of the people here the response is very unanimous and hearty. The truth is, "Old Leisure," whose extinction George Eliot deplores in "Adam Bede," is not dead, as that authoress supposed; he has emigrated to South Africa, and settled in these colonies. There is always plenty of time in Cape Town, and you could find no better illustration of this abundance than the sailing of a steamer with the mails for England, when all sorts of people leave all sorts of occupations to come down to the docks, and fill the decks of the vessel. "Twenty men," said a well-known ship captain to me, "will see one man off; and when they go ashore each of them draws twenty-six foot of water." There is no better excuse for a drink, for a lounge, for an hour or two's indulgence of the love of "loafing," which prevails

as a passion might in the bosom of the South African, whether Dutch or Britisher—there is no better excuse, I say, for a carouse and a chorus than the seeing friends off. An example of this occurred at Port Elizabeth. Two boatloads of men, singing "Rule Britannia," "Auld Lang Syne," and the like, arrived alongside our ship, and in a few minutes flooded the saloon. Then might have been heard a continuous popping of champagne corks and loud cheers, alternating with hoarse choruses. All this uproar and drinking was designed to celebrate the departure of a single individual; and I could not but think of the fable of the mountain and the mouse, when, after the crowd had gone away, most of them not a little "elevated," and shrieking out "Auld Lang Syne" in transports of farewell, I asked what all this fuss was about, and ascertained that it related to the sailing of a very little man, about the size of a boy of twelve years old.

An immense crowd congregated to witness the departure of the *Spartan* from Cape Town. Some time before we sailed two or three men were helped over the side, and vanished in the dust that the South-Easter was raising, on legs which worked like corkscrews under them. Amongst the mass of people on deck I observed a bishop, stalking here and there, habited in stockings and a white helmet. I was told he had spent five years amongst the blacks, scarce beholding a white man in all that time; and there was something moving in the childlike wonder of his stare as he gazed at an exhibition of life different indeed from the kraals, the beads, the assegais, the woolly heads, and unclad ebony forms he was accustomed to. I fell into conversation with him, and found him to be the Bishop for Zululand. He told me he was going home to obtain means to establish

schools of a higher character than that of those now existing, and also to get one or two able men to help in them.

"What sort of district is it that you inhabit?" said I.

"I am close to Isandhlwana Hill. There was no station there before the war. The only white man to be found for miles keeps a small country store, and lives alone."

"Is your house wood or stone?"

"Stone. It is a strong house and includes a school-room. The church stands near, and is built of sandstone from Isandhlwana Hill. It is a memorial church, mainly subscribed for by the relatives and friends of the officers and men who fell in the war. As an example, all ranks of the 24th Regiment, which lost six hundred men, gave a day's pay."

"It has been said to me," I observed, "that the best, perhaps the only hope of the colony, lies in civilizing the native tribes, so as to render them trade constituents."

"I agree most fully," answered the bishop; "but if the civilization of the black is to help the colony, our business should be to protect him from the vices of civilization."

"What vices?"

"Drink, pre-eminently," he answered. "You must forbid trade in drink. The Boers are establishing themselves in Zululand. They sell to the negroes a gin of vilest quality, imported from Delagoa Bay, and the Dutch do not intend to restrain the sale of it. One consequence of this traffic is to induce the natives, who are an abominably lazy lot, and will not work, to labour so as to get money to buy gin." *

* But if they will work for gin, might not they be by-and-by induced

"I believe," said I, "your people wear very little dress."

"Very little indeed," rejoined the bishop. "A costume composed of a waist-belt, with fur tails and a square flap, a snuff-box in a slit in the lobe of the ear, and a ring on top of the head, suffice to furnish out a complete Zulu dandy. A leather petticoat indicates the married woman, whilst maidenhood is illustrated by a small patch of beads about three inches square."

"I am told," said I "that the Kaffirs and the Zulus are pretty honest people until they are civilized, when they immediately become thieves, liars, and drunkards."

"I am afraid there is truth in that," said the worthy bishop, with a sigh.

Yet here was this excellent person making the passage to England for no other purpose than to obtain funds for the promotion of civilization amongst a community who, he admitted, when civilized, degenerated from their raw, but moral condition, into rogues and blackguards! Nevertheless, it was touching to think of this cultured gentleman, and his amiable and devoted wife, hidden out of sight amid the desolation of an African plain, surrounded by savages scarce removed in their habits from baboons. "Oh, but I am well off," exclaimed the bishop, when I spoke to this effect; "there is a post twice a week; whereas I know a clergyman in charge of a mission that is one thousand miles distant from the nearest post-office."

Meanwhile the steamer remains fast alongside the wharf. Her decks swarm with people; and the quay is densely crowded. Here you see a couple of judges absorbed in eager conversation; there you watch the

'to work for things less injurious, and so be sloped gradually into habits of decent and useful industry?

animated countenances and lively movements of men who are pointed out to you as a Prime Minister, an Attorney-General, a Crown Commissioner, a Colonial Secretary. There were some moving scenes ere our warps were let go, and the bell sounded in the engine-room. One man, who was taking leave of his wife, again and again ran up the ladder, to give her a final kiss, and to utter a last farewell. When he came on board for the sixth or seventh time she disappeared, and an old quartermaster, thrusting his tongue in his cheek, exclaimed to me, in a hoarse whisper, "She's growed sick of it, and's gone down in the fore-saloon along with another gent." The clinging of a mother to her daughter was an incident full of pathos, the fuller, indeed, for the expression of impassioned grief in each countenance, and for the silence between them, broken only by sobs they could not suppress. The quay, as we slowly forged ahead, was a sight to remember, filled with people waving hats and handkerchiefs, some with their faces buried in their hands and some with their backs to us, as though they could not bear to watch the ship's going. It was a sign of the popularity of many of the passengers sailing for England, and I frankly admit it affected me not a little to think that the English hearts in the greater proportion of that large crowd yearned for the old country to which our head was presently to be pointed, and watched our receding ship with eyes as wistful as those of exiles. In a few minutes the many seaward-looking faces on the quay drew dim, the hues of the ladies' apparel became wan, the grouped foreground merged into the grey and green tints of the land beyond, the white houses stole out with scintillating windows, Table Mountain seemed to uprear itself like a giant stiffening his mighty figure, and when that vast presence

made itself felt by our withdrawal to a distance whence the fulness of the majestic mass could be grasped, all things took a dwarfish character—Cape Town became lilliputian, the houses at Sea Point looked habitations just big enough for elves only, and thus the picture passed away minute, ivory-like, full of the starry sparkling of windows catching the glorious radiance and of the fitful flashes of signal hand-glasses.*

As we steamed out of Table Bay a really extraordinary story of somnambulism was related to me. A mail steamer, commanded by Captain Wait, the master of the ship in which I was now proceeding home, arrived at dusk off Cape Town, and dropped anchor till daylight should enable her to enter the docks. During the evening some of the passengers fell to talking about somnambulism and the tricks of sleep-walkers. A gentleman who was present looked very uneasy and distressed, and, after a little, entreated that the subject might be changed, as he was in the habit himself of walking in his sleep. At half-past three o'clock in the morning a light draught of air blew over the water from the North. The fourth mate had charge of the watch, and was walking to the bow of the steamer to see if all was right there with the cable, when a quartermaster approached him and said he could hear some one crying for help, out in the darkness. They strained their ears, and, after a little, distinctly heard a cry coming feebly across the water. Captain Wait was aroused, and ordered the gig to be manned, under the command of the second mate. At the distance of about four hundred yards from the stern of the steamer the boat came across a man floating, but barely conscious. When dragged

* It is a custom here to flash farewells to friends on board ships leaving the bay.

over the side he fell senseless in the bottom of the gig. He was attended by the doctor, and by Captain Wait, and regained consciousness in about an hour and a half. He said he could not imagine how he had fallen into the water; he supposed that he must have been affected by the conversation during the evening, arose in his sleep, and walked overboard. The shock of the immersion awoke him, and somehow, though in darkness and in the water, he contrived to find out that he was dressed in his overcoat, coat, waistcoat, undervest, trousers, and shoes. "The strangest part of the yarn," said my informant, "is, that the man could not swim a stroke, and yet he succeeded whilst in the water in pulling off his topcoat, waistcoat, and trousers, so that when picked up he had nothing on but his undervest and shoes. The general opinion was that he must have been in the water at least half an hour before he was rescued, for there was no current, and as he could not swim, and as he apparently lay motionless all the while on his back, he could not possibly have drifted in less time to the spot where he was found. He had two hundred and twenty-eight pounds in his coat pocket, and this he lost, with the clothes out of which he had so mysteriously managed to crawl whilst lying in the water."

It does not take long for people to settle down to the routine of shipboard. The weather is nearly always fine and delightful during the run from Cape Town to Madeira, and as often as not quiet and agreeable from Madeira to England. After leaving the Cape you swing rapidly into the blue and joyous South-East Trades, and sway to the cradling heave of the sapphire billow gracefully flinging its sparkling snow at the ship as it chases her from the cool South.* There is sure to be

* I find a lively contrast between the old and the new in a descrip-

sea-sickness at the first start, many empty chairs at the tables, glimpses of hollow faces and compressed lips flitting phantom-like from the cabin to the deck and from the deck to the cabin. The lady who has brought twenty or thirty dresses with her is still abed; she has no thoughts about anything being too narrow in the back and too loose in the waist, and the rouge-pot lies untouched in her trunk. The girl whose gay laugh whilst in dock you heard ringing from one end of the ship to the other lies prostrate on a bench with blanched cheeks and closed eyelids, illustrating the utter indifference of nausea to all material things by the reckless crushing of her hat upon the iron arm of the seat along which she stretches her figure. The gentleman in the nautical clothes and yachting cap finds no relish in tobacco, and likes brandy and water better than soup. Here and there you see one or two people aggressively hearty and impertinently well. But four or five days pass before the tables are filled, and even then the rumour spreads of a lady keeping her cabin somewhere forward, and of a gentleman requiring his meals to be taken to him to his berth over the propeller.

What movement there is, is of a pitching rather than of a rolling nature, and hence there is some little justification for sickness in people who, when they have re-

tion by Sir Arthur Brooke Faulkner, written in 1832: "Whenever," says he, "I wish to be happy in the most untoward conjuncture of this world's accidents, I think of the *Caldicott* and her dead-lights, without a chair to sit down upon, and the parboiled hen served up heels in the air, half-plucked, for dinner by the dirty cabin-boy: and these the only comforts to keep off famine and beguile the scene of boiling sea and storm that raged about her. On this awful hurricane night the topmast was carried away, and for consolation the sea-washed master, heaping shame and curses on the heads of the owners for sending out such a vessel, exhibited fragments of the mast to show it was as rotten as snuff: the inference from which was that the ship was snuff too."

covered, talk with pomposity of the number of times they have crossed the Equator. When eventually all the passengers emerged, so that a bird's-eye view could be taken of them as they sat about the quarter-deck, I was not a little struck by the costumes and jewellery of the ladies. Diamonds flashed on every finger, in every ear, on every neck—Cape diamonds, indeed, but they sparkled all the same, compelling the attention here and there to hands which would have been prettier had they been gloved, and to necks with an African glow upon them that rendered the powder-puff a transparent device. There must be some smart dressmakers in the colony—unless, indeed, the ladies import their clothes from Europe. I never saw apparel better cut, fits more choice and tasteful, than among the colonial ladies on board our steamer. Some suggestion of opulence should lie in all this glitter of diamonds and in all this variety and finish of attire; and nothing but malice could dictate the assertion that it is the custom of many of the fine ladies of Cape Town, Kimberley, and other places, to wear two-thirds of what their husbands own upon their fingers and backs.*

You would conclude that a democratic spirit prevails amongst a community who have had to labour at all sorts of trades, who have undertaken work in all sorts of directions to get money, who have been or who are diamond brokers, keepers of hotels and of canteens, storekeepers, or, in other words, shopkeepers dealing in every possible article of merchandise, contractors, mining engineers, overseers, diggers, ostrich farmers, pawnbrokers, "smouzers" or watch hawkers, cabdrivers, transport-riders, detectives, railway porters, who rank as

* Yet this should be credited, if for no other reason than to suppress these exaggerated and vulgar exhibitions of jewellery.

civil servants, and so on, and so on. In such a community you would not expect to find people critical of antecedents because the man who is driving a cab to-day might be found to have held a very flourishing position in some old edition of the "Landed Gentry;" whilst the merchant who figures in the Legislative Assembly, who may be a member of the Ministry, who owns two or three houses, and whose person is ablaze with diamond studs and diamond rings, may have begun his colonial life as a waiter not more unwilling even then than now to talk about his relations. If a ship be as man is—a microcosm, the truth should be found in her though it be but a miniature verity; and certainly what I noticed in the airs and behaviour of the colonials on board the *Spartan* led me to conclude that the lines of the social gradations are more sharply defined and more peremptorily insisted upon in South Africa than they are in Great Britain.

As an instance: a few days after we left Cape Town the captain proposed a dance; lamps of various colours were hung along under the awnings; the openings between the stanchions upon the rail were draped with signal flags, and a few further embellishments transformed the white and spacious quarterdeck of the steamer into a very elegant ball-room. The sight was extremely pretty; the red and green and white of the lamplight flashed up the brasswork, and twinkled in starry gems in the glass of the skylights. A curiously nautical detail was furnished by a quartermaster, in flowing trousers and with a cap on nine hairs, unconsciously standing at the large double wheel, with his hands upon the spokes, watching the dancing. There was a young moon up in the dusk, and as the steamer slowly swayed you saw the luminary sweep, like a silver sickle, past the

interstices among the flags and the awnings. The ocean was black, glassy, and tremulous with starflakes, whilst the wake of the moon, of an ice-like hue, ran with serpentine motion upon the undulations of the sea from the horizon to our ship. It was the very night for a dance; but the result was a half-hearted business, mere flatness and failure indeed. The ladies objected to the partners suggested to them; one man they said kept a store at Cape Town; another kept a canteen at Kimberley; a third had started a railway refreshment-room; a fourth was a magistrate's clerk somewhere up country. Only three or four persons were considered good enough for the ladies to stand up with, and the consequence was you had a knot of disgusted and disaffected men smoking in a recess under the hurricane deck, grumbling and complaining amongst themselves, whilst they watched with sarcastic sneers the capering, and twirling, and sliding about of the few couples who had sole possession of the quarter-deck.

I do not know that I should have mentioned this ludicrously trivial subject were it not for the excuse it gives me to say a word or two upon a condition or feature of the vocation of the shipmaster which I have not yet touched upon, and which I believe has never yet been dealt with. The point occurs to me particularly in reference to my recollection of the trouble that Captain Travers of the *Tartar* took to amuse his passengers. He had but a magic lantern, yet in order to provide us with that simple entertainment he had to bury himself in a quiet part of the ship with the thermometer standing at about ninety degrees in the shade, and there, aided by the surgeon, rehearse the slides, get the written story that the magic lantern was to illustrate by heart, study the effects to be produced, rig his little hurdy-gurdy

organ, and give himself generally as much trouble over a business designed wholly for the entertainment of the passengers as a theatrical manager would devote to the production of a pantomime. It was then whilst watching my friend's labours, and thinking of the weight of cares which lay upon his shoulders besides, that the question occurred to me: is the captain of a large passenger steamer well advised in accepting as an obligation the task of entertaining his passengers by the stereotyped though only available methods which can be employed at sea? Is it not the true policy of a captain to be *with* his passengers, but not *of* them; to readily acquiesce in any reasonable proposals which may be made to him, but not to be the first to suggest? My own opinion is that if a captain undertakes to amuse the people committed to his trust he runs certain risks which no wise man would very willingly challenge. For instance, he may involuntarily become one of a clique. Let us say that he proposes a dramatic representation; he will take a part in it himself and others enter into the arrangement. These people may or may not be popular on board; but in any case he is much thrown with them. He has to rehearse, he has to discuss, he is forced by the demands made upon his leisure to neglect others, who the more grumblingly resent his withdrawal in proportion as he surrenders himself to his own "set." In all probability many hard things will be said. Fault is found in directions which would have been deemed faultless enough but for the irritation. The voyage is declared to be the dullest ever made; the ship the worst roller ever launched; and whilst the captain is slaving at rehearsals, in the hope of furnishing a pleasant evening to all hands, men with long faces and women with sour faces are wandering about the ship saying that they are

neglected; that, in their opinion, the vessel is not properly watched, and possibly, therefore, not safely navigated, and that they will never sail again in her.

This is a purely hypothetical case; but I believe no traveller of experience will deny the possibility of it. Directors and owners should settle these matters so as to remove the responsibility of dealing with them from the shoulders of their captains. Nothing can be more intelligible than the desire of a master to popularize his ship; but whether her popularity is to be obtained by her commander forcing a sort of obligation on his passengers to be jolly I must beg leave to doubt. The sea is so full of perils, a ship requires such incessant and indefatigable watching, there are such scores of essential points in the internal economy of her to attend to, that the more thoughtful a passenger is the better pleased he will be to find the captain's time dedicated wholly to his most important and onerous duties. No master, either in the interests of his ship or of his own reputation, can afford to belong to a clique of his passengers; and yet it is almost impossible for a captain to take the initiative in the diversions of a voyage without becoming the centre of a clique. The shipmaster's safest attitude must be one of cordial reserve. He must do nothing likely to suggest to passengers that he is capable of, or actually, making distinctions between persons. The lady ought not to fare better at his hands than the vulgar woman, the rich man not better than one whose attire or talk may suggest a slender purse. The captain should take a position which may enable all to rally about him as a centre, favouring not one more than another, and distributing his courtesies with impartial judgment. Experience may be against me in these views; the majority of the passengers may like to be amused and

look to the captan to inspire and to help them. Yet a shipmaster jealous of his own dignity and wisely studious of his own interests will not voluntarily incur more obligations than his profession imposes upon him; and if I were captain of a ship then, unless the persons who employed me specially required me to supplement my vocational knowledge by promoting and assisting in dances, theatricals, and the like, I should consider my duty towards the passengers sufficiently discharged by rendering their programmes such assistance as the vessel could yield, meanwhile holding aloof myself, and so rescuing my professional life from the risks which a man must run who undertakes offices from which a tactician might recoil, and places the serious side of his work as a commander at the mercy of every jealous and irritable person on board his ship.

But this by the way. Meanwhile the steamer, with her bow making a straight course for St. Helena, is sweeping with the swift floating, rushing motion you notice in the albatross over the swell that lifts in dark blue folds to her quarter, and underruns her at a speed equal to twice her own velocity. The breeze comes up in a soft gushing; head to wind we should be making half a gale of it, but the nimble heels of the *Spartan* take all weight out of the blowing wind, and the breeze that is strong enough to swing the heads off the seas, and to fling the spray of innumerable billows sunwards for the glory of the rainbows which they catch, comes over our flying taffrail in a wafting as soft as the draught from a lady's fan. You could lean an hour over the stern without wearying of the kaleidoscopic splendour of the wake that rushes away from under you; it is marbled by the foam beneath the water; the intense blue of the clear patches is deepened yet by the boiling

white of the froth and by swirling masses of yellow bubble, and by the glass-like glittering of myriads of foam bells. The shadows sway like pendulums upon the deck; the sunlight flashes in a blinding dazzle out of the iron side of the steamer as she rolls her wet, black plates towards the luminary; a thin vein of bluish smoke breaks from the waving funnel and blows over the port-bow low down on the sea there. The trade-clouds fly in single bodies, and they are all of a delicate orange tint, as though they were illumined by some orb with a deeper African mellowness of glory than yonder sun has that at noon shines almost directly overhead.

Yet this peculiar brilliance and tender beauty of orange which the flying clouds now possess you will sometimes see in a sunset even in latitudes beyond the polar verge of the tropics. I remember watching the sun sinking when we were some days yet from St. Helena. The western sky was cloudless, and the luminary, shorn of his rays, sank like a ball of fire, with an outline exquisitely defined. He was the palest amber at first, with a reflection upon the water coming down to the ship in sheets of glory broken by the heavings; but as his lower limb closed the horizon the disc rapidly passed to yellow, darkening into richest scarlet, that flung a blood-like lustre over the whole face of the sky that way, full of fiery menace. The suggestion of incandescence was a kind of oppression to the fancy, and you could see by the startled and earnest looks directed at that sunset that more than one mind was sensible of an element of fear in the sublimity of the spectacle. The blood-like lustre gave a lining as of molten ruby ore to the white waters breaking away from the stem of our ship. It veined all bright things that reflected light with lines of fire, and the decks of the steamer sparkled

out in whole constellations of crimson stars to the burning of that marvellous scarlet circle.

Indeed, there are a hundred things to admire and for memory to linger over with fondness, and often with adoration, in a voyage up and down the azure seas which wash the long stretch of African coast you pass on your road from England to the Cape and home again. Sometimes a single simple picture would impress recollection to a degree beyond even the power of stirring spectacles of grandeur and magnificence. Thus, when I close my eyes there rises before me a slate-coloured sea, in the midst of which we are sailing, whilst the horizon around is of an ocean blue, merging into a dainty greenness of sky. We are steaming under the shadow of a heavy cloud which is sweeping along overhead, a very little faster than we are moving. It is a kind of eclipse in its way, but we are circled with a rim of the glory of the day that is beyond the cloud. Slowly this mountainous body of dark vapour settles away ahead, and, as the confines of its shadow astern draw up to us, so you see the laughing glittering of the sea stealing towards us, too, until the sparkling azure enfolds us again, and our black sides are caressed by arching heads of snow, whilst not twenty fathoms beyond our bow lies the slowly withdrawing darkness, like the shadow of night itself passing away.

"Sail, oh!" sings out some hearty voice, and down on the starbow board you catch sight of a dingy, square shape, which, on examining it through a telescope, you find to be the topsails and top gallant-sails of a large ship, running, with her royal yards on deck. She is probably travelling at six knots an hour, whilst we are steaming thirteen. Presently the cloud shadow passes beyond her, and the superb configuration of canvas

leaps out of the duskiness into moon-like whiteness. She is a fine vessel, homeward bound from Calcutta, pushing through it with a majesty of slow and solemn heaving such as must make the quick pitching of our steamer a decidedly clownish performance. As we approach her we foreshorten her canvas, and when abeam her yards come into one with her masts, and as she shows no staysails but one she looks like a big ship at anchor out there. A few strokes of our propeller dispel the illusion; her weather yardarms steal out, and as she passes away upon our quarter she gleams bland and full again in all the beauty of a crowd of sails cut to a hair, with a hearkening, seeking look in the lustrous rounds of her white cloths, whilst her slow pitching makes her seem to be dropping endless curtsies to us.

But the sun has been "shot," the run marked up, our position shown upon the chart, and the captain coming amongst us, says that he hopes to be at anchor off St. Helena at midnight.

CHAPTER XXII.

"IT ACTED LIKE A CHARM."

We were in the smoking-room talking about the hardships of the mariner's calling. The subject had been brought about by somebody referring to the experiences of the master and mates of the ship—four of them out of the five having been shipwrecked: the master twice, in the vessel he commanded and in the steamer that

subsequently picked him up; and the first, third, and fourth mates once apiece. A Colonial merchant, putting down his pipe, said that the topic recalled to his mind a little incident which he would relate to us if we cared to hear it. He started thus :—

"I was sitting at a table in the smoking-room of a London hotel, when two persons approached and seated themselves opposite me. One was a portly, red-faced, beaming old gentleman, with several chins, and a perfect Atlantic Ocean of black satin waistcoat, gleaming and rippling over proportions as abundant as the amplest that ever excited the witty admiration of Sydney Smith. It was years since I had met a man in a satin waistcoat. His companion was a young fellow about seventeen years old; his face was dark with exposure to weather. He was dressed coarsely in rough sea clothes. I noticed a silver ring on the third finger of his left hand; whilst the hands themselves, though small, bore signs of rough, tough work in their darkened palms, square finger-tips, and bronzed knuckles.

"'D'ye think you can manage a small glass of whiskey, William?' said the old fellow, with a provincial accent; and gazing upon the youth with an immense smile so exceedingly good-humoured that it was impossible not to grin in sympathy.

"'I'll try, father,' answered the lad, with a manner that seemed sullen at first, till I began to think there was some shamefacedness in it.

"A waiter was called, glasses ordered, and the old gentleman lighted a cigar whilst the lad filled a pipe. For some minutes we sat in silence, the youth smoking with his eyes fixed on the floor, the old gentleman puffing at his cigar with many a rolling glance of his dark, humorous eyes round the room, occasionally

bringing his gaze to me as though courting me to address him, with an expression of merriment in his looks that threatened explosions of laughter should the slightest excuse offer.

"'This young gentleman,' said I, 'seems fresh from a warmer sun than that which shines over London.'

"'He's just home from the West Indies,' said the old gentleman, with a chuckle in his lower notes like the gurgling noise made in a bottle when its contents are poured out. 'He's been to sea, sir, as a sailor—as a sailor, sir; and he don't like it!' Here the old fellow's suppressed mirth heaved his waistcoat into a rolling swell, upon which his massive watch-chain swayed as if it had been the cable of a ship, coming and going in the hollows of a seaway.

"'You found the life hard, I dare say?' said I, turning to the lad.

"'Brutally hard, sir,' he answered quietly. 'There's not a mongrel cur smelling about the heels of a crowd on a pavement that, as a matter of humanity, I'd send to sea.'

"'Ha! ha! ha!' roared the old gentleman uproariously. 'It does me good to hear him; I assure you it does, sir,' said he, wiping his eyes. 'If you only knew the struggle we had, the arguments, the entreaties we used! Why, sir, his mother almost went upon her knees to him. But what I say is, every one must carry his own candle in this world to find his way along. There's no use in trying to pick a road by the light of another man's flame. The only way to persuade a fellow against his will is to force him to make a fool of himself. This youngster insisted upon going to sea. A few weeks of reality have prevailed upon him, when all the talk of all the most ancient mariners in this kingdom, reasoning

with him for ten years, would only have ended in strengthening his resolution, and perhaps tempting him to run away. It was *my* idea,' he continued, with his irrepressible smile, and in a voice positively oily with self-complacency; '*I* hit upon it. The cure's mine. Isn't it, William?'

"The lad smiled, but a certain shamefacedness was in all he did and said. I could see how it was, and felt for him. The old idealism had been remorselessly broken to pieces, the gay dreams glittering and prismatic with the light of the young imagination had passed, the vision was dissolved, nothing lingered but remembrance of hardship, cruelty, and the flavour of abominable food. Perhaps the stout and smiling old gentleman read the passing emotion of sympathy in my glance, or it might be that he was of a communicative disposition. He took a drink, and said—

"'As I never had the least passion for the sea myself, as I suffer from a sensation of nausea even if I think of going on board a ship, and as I am dreadfully sea-sick when I *am* on board, whether the waves roll, or whether the sea is calm, it's not surprising that I am unable to understand what boys should find in the ocean to tempt them to go to it. This lad was made to be a sailor. Sir, he even learnt to chew tobacco, to his mother's horror, in anticipation of the time when he should be a jolly tar. He read nothing but sea stories, and made himself very objectionable to his schoolmasters in imitation of some of the young heroes of the books he devoured. He imitated the gait of the mariner, and swang from side to side as he walked. He picked up nautical words from his reading, which, as I was informed by a naval captain, a friend of mine, he misapplied, though it was all the same to my wife's and my

ears; for what, sir, were we to know of sheets and stays, of braces and bonnets, of guys and gammoning, and such jargon, only so far as they related to the things the terms express to us who live ashore? How he got his knowledge of ships and rigging and boats I'm sure I can't guess. I don't think he could tell himself.'

"The youth smiled and the old gentleman burst into a laugh.

"'Well,' continued the old fellow, 'he was mad to go to sea. His mother entreated him almost on her bended knees to dismiss such a wild boyish fancy. Didn't she, William?'

"The lad said, 'Yes,' in a subdued voice.

"'I reasoned with him, too, and got several of my friends to argue. I'm a pretty well-to-do man, myself, and though not rich enough to allow my boys to grow up in idleness, I have the means, I hope, to see 'em safely into snug, improving businesses. Why, then, did William want to go to sea, when he could count upon a liberal education and a kind father's hand and purse to help him into something good hereafter? Not to mention a mother's love to watch over him whilst he was under our roof.'

"Here the old fellow tried to look sentimentally at William; but an air of gravity was beyond his reach. He smiled till he laughed out, then took another drink and proceeded, whilst his son, gathering courage, stole a glance at me, to see, perhaps, what I thought of his father's open talk.

"'Finding the lad obstinate and determined I turned his desire over in my mind, and thought it might be worth my while to look seriously into the question of the sailor's life as a profession. For, thought I, it's a hard calling, no doubt; but then vast numbers of lads go to

it. There must be prizes, and when a youth shows a strong liking for any particular profession he should not be balked? It's true he can't become a Nelson in the merchant service, and he's too old for the navy, but he might become a Captain Cook, or end in owning ships. Well, my naval friend knew a shipowner in London, and advised me, without saying anything to my son, to go up and have a talk with him. I did so. He was perfectly candid, and no information I ever received more surprised me. He said that the sea was the very last calling he should advise any man to put his son to. In the forecastle English sailors were no longer wanted, the foreigner was taken instead, because he was willing to work for little money and on such food as would set English crews mutinying. As to officers and captains, he said their number was so out of proportion to the demand for them that men of skill and experience were half-starving in all directions for the want of employment. He said the time was fast approaching when no man would be able to obtain command of a ship unless he was prepared to invest a sum of money which would always be considerable to one who was poor; which sum, he added, was almost certain to be lost through the bankruptcy or the fraudulent behaviour of those who received it. He assured me that he could see no prospect at all for a youth at sea. He said, people talk to you of a lad rising to the command of a fine ocean passenger-ship, but, said he, pray consider how very few such ships there are in comparison with the mass of men who would be glad to command them, and so conceive how small are the chances a lad stands of ever reaching to such a position. And even when reached, what does it amount to? An income out of which but little can be saved, even if a man should have the luck to retain his

berth for many years, with the risk of dismissal and the forfeiture of all professional opportunities through an error of judgment that may bring the ship into jeopardy. In fact,' said the old gentleman, smiling broadly, 'this shipowner was so candid with me that I returned home with even a meaner opinion of the merchant service as a profession than I had before entertained. Well, as William here will tell you, I put all that the shipowner had told me before him, and reasoned with him on the information I had obtained, but to no purpose. He declared he didn't believe a word the shipowner had said, that he had made up his mind to go to sea, that it was the only calling in the world fit for a man to follow, and that sooner than be hindered he would run away from home. What was to be done? If the boy ran away we might hear no more of him, or he might fall into evil ways, be ruined for life, and prove a degradation to us. I said to my friend, the retired naval officer, "William intends to have his way, and he must be humoured, as we can't keep him locked up in his bedroom, you know, day and night. I've a mind to send him for one voyage—a voyage that should cover three or four months. He'll see for himself what the life is, and there'll be time enough to give the gilt a chance of wearing off."

"'"You can't do better," said my friend, and he advised me to consult the shipowner he had previously referred me to. Again I called upon this gentleman, and told him my ideas.

"'"It'll be the best way of curing him," said he, "but you must contrive that the cure shall be complete. He must go to sea before the mast as a boy. He must be shipped as an ordinary seaman. Give him such an outfit as an ordinary seaman would take, and leave the rest to the captain."'

"Here the speaker burst into a loud laugh, and called for another glass of whiskey, meanwhile regarding his lad with strong marks of fondness in the mirthful expression of his face.

"'I hope I don't bore you, sir,' said he to me.

"'Not at all, sir,' said I; 'on the contrary, I am much interested. I have made several voyages myself, and other people's experiences naturally amuse me.'

"'It ended,' he proceeded, 'in my leaving everything to be managed by this shipowner, whose name shall be Mr. James. He advised me not to interfere, not to see the captain, not to put my finger into the pie in any way. His notion was that the arrangements should come as near as possible to the experience the lad might get were he to run away. All that I knew was William would sign articles for a barque,'—here the boy muttered something, and puffed at his pipe with a little show of temper —'bound,' continued the old gentleman with his vast smile, 'to Kingston, Jamaica. Mr. James would see to his chest and bedding, and my farewell was to be taken of him at his own home; in other words, I was not to see him off. Well,' said the old fellow, with a side-look at his son, 'I didn't like it, I didn't like it at all, sir; but it was to be kill or cure, so far as the sea went, and that reconciled me. His mother proved a terrible difficulty, as I had suspected; but I got the parson of the parish to help me, and two friends in whose opinions she had confidence, and it ended in her agreeing to let him go. And he went. Yes, my lad,' said he, turning to his son, 'you went. It was with a dry eye and a light step. I own it, you bore yourself like a man. Your heart was aching, William. I could see that when you turned from your mother; but your boyish fancies were strong in you, and, on the whole, you went away with a light

foot, scarcely guessing, my boy, how, when you had turned the corner, your mother and I would sit down and cry to think of the child we might never see again.'

"'Oh, father, it's over, it's past now,' said the lad, with a flush of feeling coming into his face.

"The jolly old fellow blew his nose, lighted another cigar, and said, 'It's very nearly eight months since he left. I had news that his ship had been signalled in the Channel, and I went down this morning with the ship-owner to the West India Docks, where the vessel had arrived, to meet him. And what d'ye think were the first words he said to me, almost before I had time to put my hands out to him? "Father," he says, "I've had enough of it, I've had enough of it. I'll never go to sea again!"'

"If the most exquisite wit had been wrapped up in this exclamation the old fellow couldn't have possibly relished it more. He lay back in his chair, the better to give vent to several thunderous explosions of laughter, amid the intervals of which he would repeat in a gurgling voice and with a purple face, 'Father, I've had enough of it, I've had enough of it! I'll never go to sea again!'

"'You found the sea a rougher life than you expected?' said I to the youth, anxious to bring the stout old man to a more collected posture of mind, for everybody in the room, startled by his tremendous laugh, was engaged in staring at us.

"'Rough?' exclaimed the youth, putting down his pipe, 'why, I'd rather be a half-starved London cab-horse than a sailor!'

"'What ideas had you of the sea?' said I, whilst the stout old gentleman leaned forward to listen.

"'Well, I thought it was a fine life,' he answered,

'but the books about it are full of lies. They're only written for girls to read, in my opinion. If the reality were to be written about, people ashore would be so shocked that nobody would buy the works.'

"'You appear to have been disgusted to some purpose,' said I, smiling. 'What was the tonnage of the vessel?'

"'Four hundred and forty register,' he answered, and then kindling, he said, 'As you've made some voyages you'll understand more about what I've gone through than my father can.'

"The old fellow with his glass to his lips, winked at me with a countenance beaming with high delight.

"'In the first place,' continued the lad, 'she was a wooden ship, twenty-seven years old, and wanted pumping every four hours, except in heavy weather, when she was pumped all day long. She was so deep in the water that if you looked down at her from aloft it seemed as if her rails were flush with the surface of the sea. She had no jacks on her yards, and the job of holding on was something awful. She had single topsails, and she was so undermanned that a topgallant-sail could scarcely be taken off her without all hands being called. Two of the crew were Swedes, and didn't speak English. One was a Spanish American, and had to be laid in irons after we were a week out for threatening to knife the mate. The fo'k'sle was full of rats, and another kind of vermin I had better not mention. The rats would come up of a night and eat your toe-nails. As to the provisions,' he exclaimed, with a fire coming into his young eyes, 'why, if sailors weren't the most miserable, uncared-for wretches in the world, would people dare to offer them such food as was given to us?'

"Here the old gentleman winked at me again. His

face could not possibly express more delight, and the excess unable to find an outlet in his features worked in his corpulent limbs till it and suppressed merriment kept him as agitated as a dish of jelly on a cabin table in a seaway.

"'The pork,' said the boy, speaking rapidly, 'was covered with a thin coating of green, which the cook said it was better not to scrape away as it kept the flavour in. The beef had to be sawn, the strongest man couldn't dissect it in the kids with a knife. The sugar was little better than molasses, filled with dirt and grit, and the tea was like hot water into which an apron full of small sticks and twigs had been thrown. That was what they gave us to eat and drink, and on that fare we were expected to work for twenty-four hours in every day when required.'

"'And he used to grumble,' said the old man, looking at me as if he must die of laughing, 'if his mother thought that we could sometimes do without pudding if we had fish before the joint and dessert to end with!'

"'How were you treated at the start?' I asked.

"'Why, as if I had been at sea all my life; as if I had come aboard with sea-legs and a waterproof stomach, warranted incapable of nausea. I slept in the fo'k'sle. My bunk was well forward, and at every pitch the water would drain in fit to float my blanket on to the deck. It was impossible to keep dry. She was so wet a ship that the scuttle was nearly always closed. We had nothing but a slush-lamp to see by, and you may imagine what a pleasant interior it was with the deck full of water, the gloom so thick you had to feel for what you wanted, rats and other delicacies to keep you awake in your watch below, the chaps thickening the poisonous atmosphere by blowing out dark clouds of tobacco.'

"He made a wry face and put down his pipe with a gesture of sheer loathing, whereat his jolly old father quivered all over with suppressed delight and merriment, and I noticed with amusement that he now kept his gaze constantly fastened on me with a view to catching my eye in order that he might wink.

"'Did they work you pretty hard?' said I.

"'Ay,' he answered, 'shamefully hard. I felt it most at the beginning. They wouldn't let me be sea-sick. I mean they wouldn't give me a chance to get over it. We were five days beating out of the English Channel, from the Downs to clear of Scilly, and I was sick all that time. It blew fresh, and the weather was wet and thick, and at times there was a very nasty sea on. In my bunk, right forward in the fo'k'sle, I felt the motion fearfully, as you may suppose, but no mercy was shown me. I was dragged out, and was shoved up on deck through the scuttle and sent aloft with one of the men to help him to roll up the foretopgallant sail, when I felt so weak from sickness and from not having tasted food that I could hardly stand upright.'

"'They meant to disgust you,' said I. 'Yet that sort of treatment to a green hand comes very close to sheer brutality, and it is utterly useless too—bad for the lad and no good to the crew.'

"'It was all brutality, sir, from beginning to end,' talking at his father, though addressing me. 'The captain had his cue, I suppose, from the shipowner, and he hazed me in a way that actually set the rest of the crew pitying me. He'd tell the mates to find out faults in me, or to imagine them, as an excuse to bring me on deck when it was my watch below. There was no dirty job that could be invented which I wasn't put to,' he exclaimed, looking at his hands. 'It seemed to me

sometimes as if I was never to know an hour without a slush-pot hanging round my neck. I did more tarring down than all the rest of them put together. If there was nothing for the moment for me to put my hand to, I was set to help the cook in the galley.'

"Here a mulish look hardened up his face, as though resentment were growing too strong for candour, and he fell silent.

"'They were determined to make a sailor of him,' said I.

"'I beg your pardon,' exclaimed the stout old man, with a face like the Nor'-west moon, 'they were determined *not* to make a sailor of him, sir. I mean to ask the captain and his two mates to dinner. What I feel towards those three men, including the boatswain, who actually rope's-ended him, falls very little short of affection. Why, sir, any other treatment than what he experienced might have made a sailor of him for life—a member of a community whose calling he declares to be more wretched than the career of a London cab-horse. No, sir. Since the truth had to be learnt it was best learnt at once, sounded to the very bottom, and the worst of it turned uppermost right away off. A slower process would have ended in disgusting the lad when it was too late, that is to say, he would have become a sailor for life, unfit for any other calling by the time he had found out that the romances he read and the ideas he had formed had forced him into a dreadful blunder.'

"He said this smiling, but without laughing. When he ceased, however, he fell back and sent several shouts ringing through the room. There could be no question that the old fellow was overjoyed not more by the safe return of his son than by the complete success of his curative experiment upon the youth. However, after I

had wished them good night, I could not help thinking that a lad who was to be so quickly disgusted with the sea might have been cured with much less suffering to himself. Like a good many other youths who yearn for 'the sea, the sea, the open sea,' he needed but a very trifling dose of enlightenment to satisfy him that Nature had not intended that his path should be upon the mountain wave. My own experience is that a boy born with a sailor's heart in him will be a sailor no matter what may prove the sufferings he enters upon. Nevertheless, he is a kind and wise father who contrives that his son shall get a preliminary taste of the deep before launching him on it for good and all. It is seldom that a boy understands his own wishes or is qualified for the calling he believes he would like to enter. No vocation is less understood than that of the sea, and a lad basing his notions of it upon novels and the glimpse of it he obtains by visits to the sea-coast, ought to have a chance of witnessing the realities of it before his romantic fancies are humoured, and he is sent to a life of bitter servitude, singularly barren of prospects, and rendered endurable only by the feeling that bread must be earned somehow, and that a man as a sailor has few if any chances, off the ocean, of keeping himself out of the workhouse." *

* "A ship is worse than a gaol. There is in a gaol better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind; and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger. When men come to like a sea-life they are not fit to live on land." "Then," said I, "it would be cruel in a father to breed his son to the sea?" JOHNSON: "It would be cruel in a father who thinks as I do."—*Life of Johnson*. It is amusing to follow the nautical judgments of this sturdy old Tory, this "mass of genuine manhood," who knew as well as all other British sages what Jack had done for Great Britain. Yet, if you consider sea-life as it was in Johnson's day—the day of "Roderick Random"—you will not think the old moralist very absurd in his professions of horror. "As to the sailor," he says to Boswell, in another part of the life, "when you look

CHAPTER XXIII.

A CHAT WITH THE MATE.

THE night was cloudy but pale with moonshine, and a little after midnight, the *Spartan* having then cast anchor, there lay upon our port-beam a sooty mass of rock, veiled midway from its base by motionless clouds of wan vapour. There was a sort of faintness of sky past it upon the north-western horizon, such a light as you get with the breaking of a gloomy November dawn in England; and against this uncertain paleness the edge of the island reared black as a drawing in India ink, vanishing in the swarming vaporous thickness. Where the shadow lay deepest upon those acclivities you spied the sparkling of a few lamps indicating the whereabouts of Jamestown; but those scattered beams twinkling in the deep dusk like fireflies only served to intensify the extraordinary suggestions of desolation, obscurity, and loneliness which you found in that silent, sullen rock, burying its head in mist that was touched into whiteness in places by the moon behind the clouds; but that elsewhere hung in scowling folds, as though the whole must burst ere long into tempest.

down from the quarter-deck to the space below, you see the utmost extremity of human misery: such crowding, such filth, such stench!" BOSWELL: "Yet sailors are happy." JOHNSON: "They are happy as brutes are happy, with a piece of fresh meat—with the grossest sensuality." But I fear no case for Jack is to be made out of Johnson. Sir John Dalrymple said to him that the two noblest animals in the world were a Scotch Highlander and an English sailor. Johnson allowed the Highlander, but denied the sailor. He would not even concede Jack's proverbially generous character. "Sir, he throws away his money without thought and without merit. I do not call a tree generous that sheds its fruit at every breeze."

I had seen St. Helena before, on all occasions by daylight, and now found myself wishing that this midnight spectacle had been my first impression of it. The mystery of the night encompassed it, and imagination furnished to the associations of the famous rock a subtlety of interest that would have been lacking I think in sunshine. The obscured moonlight filling the atmosphere with a spectral haze; the phantom-like clouds moving slowly up from the south-east; the strange dimness of light in the north-west quarter, that seemed to owe nothing to the moon; the sense of the immensity of the ocean in which this island stood, the inexpressible idea of loneliness conveyed by the black substantial shadow, half veiled in mist, combined to produce thoughts which I dare say would never have entered the head of a man gazing with the sun over him.

We fired two twelve-pounder guns to announce our arrival, and awaken the sleepers on the island; the echoes rolled in thunder upon the black precipitous sides, and you seemed to hear them dying away amid the ashen folds that screened the towering peaks. The detonations were a fit music to harmonize one's mood with; for who, beholding the island of St. Helena, could think of aught in connection with it but Buonaparte? The fine lines of Byron came into my mind as I stood right aft in the loneliest part of the deck, surveying a picture that the magic of darkness, touched with the hazy sheen of the concealed moon, rendered as ghostly and as visionary as the historic deeds of which it is now a mere ironical memorial—

> "That name shall hallow the ignoble shore,
> A talisman to all save him who bore:
> The fleets that sweep before the Eastern blast
> Shall hear their sea-boys hail it from the mast;

When Victory's Gallic column shall but rise,
Like Pompey's pillar, in a desert skies,
The rocky isle that holds or held his dust,
Shall crown the Atlantic like the hero's bust,
And mighty nature o'er his obsequies
Do more than niggard envy still denies."

It is a thing as old as the hills, this reference to Buonaparte when you talk of St. Helena, and at a distance it is made tedious reading by iteration; but once within the sphere of the rock the spell is upon you, you cannot break from it; turn your eyes where you will, the vision of a figure with folded arms, with face of marble, with drooped head and piercing eyes lifted into a level gaze, confronts you; and never is the image so haunting, so passionately present to your waking dreams, as when the island upheaves its great black mass before you at midnight, when the spirit of the vast ocean solitude is present, and when the memory of the wondrous conqueror, of the brilliance and splendour of his career, of the rage and fire of his battle-fields is merged into that shadowy, volcanic heap of desolation yonder—an ocean tomb so full of the melancholy of the sombre unreality which night imparts that it is with a kind of relief you turn your eyes from it and direct them into the steady wind blowing out of the freedom of a thousand leagues of South.

He arrived, says the historian, after a voyage of seventy days from Plymouth, and the Count de las Cases, whose eyes were rooted upon his features, declares that when the captive viewed his prison no change was to be witnessed in his countenance. It is a scene that the darkness enables the fancy to reshape. The naval historian, James, tells the tale with grim brevity. "The Battle of Waterloo was fought, as need scarcely be stated, on the 18th of June, and on the 15th of July,

finding he could not evade the British cruisers and get to the United States, Buonaparte surrendered himself to Captain Frederick Lewis Maitland, of the *Bellerophon*, 74, lying in Basque Roads. The latter ship immediately conveyed her important charge to Torbay and then to Plymouth, where the *Bellerophon* arrived on the 26th. On the 7th of August, the ex-Emperor was removed to the 74-gun ship *Northumberland*, Captain Charles Bayne Hodgson Ross, bearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Sir George Cockburn, K.C.B. On the 8th, the *Northumberland* sailed for the island of St. Helena, and on the 16th of October they safely disembarked the 'general' and his few attendants."

Here are the bones; but where is the flesh, where the spirit, the colour, and the life? One never feels more disposed to accept Thackeray's estimate of the functions of the novelist than when reciting a bald historical stroke, and contrasting the slenderness of its import side by side with the abounding fulness of the reality it points to. For my part, I could conceive nothing in history, ancient or modern, more pregnant with intense meaning, more susceptible of the highest and most romantic treatment than this slow approach of the old stately Seventy-four to St. Helena with Napoleon Buonaparte on board. A hundred fancies are begotten; the line-of-battle ship herself, with swelling sails and leaning masts passing from day to night, from night to day, seventy times over, with a wonderful soberness of thought and demeanour amongst her officers and men born of the dominating feeling of having under the long, glorious streamer at their mast-head the Ravager of Europe, the man who had filled England, the most conquering nation the world had ever seen, with fear and rage; Napoleon, himself silent, impenetrable, with a

face hardening its iron over a mind burning with surging passions of despair and hope, of memories of blood-red conquest, and of perceptions of an issue of deepest humiliation and abject personal failure; the arrival of the stately battle-ship off Jamestown, the splash of her great anchor, the slow swinging of her with clewed-up canvas to the wind, and in one and all, not possibly more in Napoleon than in the rest, the realization, poignant as death, of the meaning of the imprisonment illustrated by that rock at whose sooty blackness under its envelopment of cloud and against the faint background of the midnight sky of the horizon I am gazing, whilst I think of the things it must perpetuate so long as its granite foot shall hold firm upon the bed of old ocean.*

But, as we all know, it is not easy to remain sentimental very long at sea. My dreams were rudely dispelled by the intrusion of one of those bores whom it is the fate of most of us to find ourselves locked up

* "It would be difficult to describe the astonishment of the inhabitants of this insulated little speck upon the arrival of the *Icaurus* sloop of war, with intelligence that Napoleon Buonaparte was a prisoner and within a few days' sail of the island. The surprise of the St. Helenians at this unlooked-for event was not unmixed with a considerable share of anxiety as to what might be the consequences to them of the appropriation of St. Helena as a prison for the ex-Emperor. . . . In the evening of the 17th October, Napoleon landed and walked to the house prepared for his reception, accompanied by Sir George Cockburn, and in the presence of perhaps the largest concourse of people that had ever assembled at St. Helena on any former occasion."—T. H. Brooke, "History of St. Helena." This writer gives some interesting anecdotes of Buonaparte. Among others, the following is striking when the loneliness and smallness of the island are thought of:—"It may well be conceived that sensations of no ordinary nature were excited at a demand from the *maître d'hôtel* of the ex-Emperor, a few days after his arrival, for *four bullocks* in order to make a *dish of brains*." The island could not feed its population of four thousand, and fresh beef being very precious, one easily understands the effect of such a demand upon the people.

with when we sail away upon the ocean in a passenger ship. On shore the bore is intolerable enough, but at sea he is simply unspeakable. He has you at his mercy, unless, indeed, you fly for shelter to your cabin; a refuge not very often endurable in a passage that from Finisterre to the Cape of Good Hope gives you a thermometer varying between 70 degrees and 100 degrees. Happy is the invalid who finds himself on board a vessel free of bores. To be able to sit and think, to be able to lounge and to read, to be able to lean over the side and send the fancy deep into the blue and yeasty swirl without being teased by processions of people inquiring one after another how your cold is, how you slept during the night, whether you feel sea-sick, whether you will have a cock-tail, how your cough is, how your wife is, and whether you are disposed to bet upon the run, is a privilege I have on more than one occasion sighed for, and which at periods grew so rare as to take, when enjoyed, the character of a luxury. My bore broke in upon me in the midst of my reflections, whereupon I walked straightway to bed, not wholly displeased at being driven perforce from an atmosphere that was fast thickening into drizzle, and that had already obscured the massive outline of the island. Shortly afterwards the anchor was lifted, the old familiar regular pounding of the engines began, and I fell asleep to the lullaby of those rhythmic notes and the steady washing of water sweeping smoothly alongside.

It was next morning that whilst exchanging a few words with Mr. Martyr, the chief mate of the *Spartan*, I spied a long, greenish dark line undulating in true serpentine fashion upon the swell, about a quarter of a mile on the starboard bow. "There's the sea-serpent!" I exclaimed; whereupon four or five passengers instantly

hurried up to look. Indeed, at sea you need only point your finger to the horizon to provoke a hasty rising of all sorts of figures and a general rush to the side. Life on shipboard is so monotonous to passengers that I have seen a knot of people staring for half an hour at a time at a part of the sea where somebody had said he thought he saw a whale, probably mistaking the shadow of the head of a billow for the back of a spouter. These people were thankful for an excuse to stare for a long stretch in any direction that promised a little more interest than the nothing in particular which they were in the habit of fixing their eyes upon, and I thought they did not seem grateful when I assured them that, even if a whale had appeared where they were told to look half an hour before, it was hardly likely to remain in the same spot, considering the speed at which we were steaming.

On my pointing out the sea-serpent to Mr. Martyr, he exclaimed, "I wish it were the brute! It is about time that he showed himself to the world at large, and settled the general doubt. I have met several men who have seen the snake, and I have beheld the creature myself; but it's like having encountered a ghost. You don't choose to talk about it for fear of ridicule, or, worse still, of people thinking you cracked."

"You have really seen the sea-serpent?" said I.

"Ay, really," he answered with emphasis; "come with me to my cabin and I'll read to you what I wrote down about the sight soon after it had hove into view."

I followed him to his berth, and, seating myself, listened whilst he read the subjoined entry made in a little book which he took down from a shelf.

"The following is a narrative of facts relating to a sea-monster seen by myself and others whose names are given below. On April 22, 1883, the R.M.S. *Spartan*

being then in the north part of the Bay of Biscay, I saw approaching the ship at eight a.m., about one hundred and fifty yards on starboard bow, its course being at right angles to ours, we steering S.W., the Head of an Animal. The Head was about the size of a boat, say twenty-five feet long by six feet beam. I examined it carefully, but could discern neither eyes nor mouth on it. The portion of its body that was above water was of a brown colour, and the Head seemed to be formed of a kind of stiff horn. This Head the beast held above the surface as though looking at us. When it was within fifty feet it dived and we passed over its wake, which was distinctly visible from the bridge. I should take the creature to have been over fifty feet long, possibly longer, for I observed a stiff apparently still fin or projection about that distance from the Head out of water. I could not suppose that this projection was the tail, for it was motionless, like the fin on a shark's back, whereas had it been its tail it must certainly have swayed in some way to propel the monster at the rate at which it was moving. The creature on diving simply put its Head under and disappeared without exhibiting any other part of its body. The angle of the projection with the Head showed that it dived under the ship. From what I saw and what the others deposed to I am led to believe that it was a serpent or gigantic lizard, and not a fish; for what fish swims with its head in the air, and in that posture goes along so fast that the water under its body in front is divided as if by a steamer? On our return voyage we heard at Madeira that a monster had sunk a small barque much about the time when we saw this serpent and in the same latitude, about eighty miles further to the westward."

As I have never seen the sea-serpent, I claim a right

to remain incredulous. I reminded Mr. Martyr of the wonderful snake that had been sighted many years ago in Table Bay; how a file of soldiers had been told off to go down and shoot the beast; how they had fired round after round into him for a whole hour without producing the least appreciable effect upon the "gigantic lizard," to use the chief officer's forcible term, and how after the soldiers had expended all their ammunition they discovered that the monster at which they had been shooting was wholly composed of sea-weed. But a man who has really seen the sea-serpent is not going very easily to surrender his conviction, and I found Mr. Martyr bland, but firm. To be sure, there is a very great deal of water in the sea, and in so many leagues of depth and breadth there ought to be, if there are not, a large number of wonderful, of beautiful, of horrible, and of startling things.

At all events, Mr. Martyr may justly claim that he is but one of many who have seen the sea-serpent with the naked eye. It is not so very long ago that a captain in the merchant service threatened to to "do for" the Wreck Commissioner, for preventing him, by the suspension of his certificate, from, to use the shipmaster's words, "doing the Almighty's work in making His wonders known." One of the wonders referred to was the sea-serpent, of which the captain possessed a specimen, unhappily only about four and a half feet long. In a pamphlet written by him he declared, "I sincerely believe that God, for some wise purpose, has been pleased to reveal this greatest wonder of nature to me. By help of good glasses (barque *Pauline*, July 8, 1875, latitude 5 degrees south, longitude 35 degrees west, Cape San Roque, north-east coast of Brazil, distance twenty miles, eleven a.m.), saw a monster sea-serpent

coiled twice round a sperm-whale. The struggles of the whale and serpent made the sea like a boiling cauldron. The last seen of the whale was its tail, and no doubt it was gorged by the serpent." The shipmaster was declared mad, the doctor of the House of Detention stating that he was suffering from monomania on the subject of the sea-serpent. But I am not so sure of that. Captain Travers of the *Tartar* informed me that on one occasion, when off the East African coast, he witnessed a battle between a whale and some thrashing creature with huge limbs, with which it dealt the whale thunderous blows. These flails were said to resemble the sails of a windmill, and Captain Travers assured me that the sight was one of the most majestic and terrible he had ever witnessed in his life. Possibly had the doctor of the House of Detention been a retired sailor he would have set his monomaniac right on a matter of detail only.*

Be this as it may, the genuine sea-serpent, the wondrous lizard of the ocean, the creature whom Jack must have caught the notion of from Milton—

> "With head up-lift above the wave, and eyes
> That sparkling blazed; his other parts besides
> Prone on the flood, extended long and large,
> Lay floating many a rood; in bulk as huge
> As whom the fables name of monstrous size;"

is still a-missing, and something bigger than a snake that can be coiled away in a portable bottle of spirits

* Has not Isaiah a distinct reference to the sea-serpent? "In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the *piercing serpent*, even leviathan that *crooked serpent*; and he shall slay the dragon *that is in the sea*." Also Daniel, when he speaks of the four winds striving upon the great sea, and then of his beholding a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible and so forth? And also St. John: "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns," etc.—clearly not a whale?

must be produced before the majority of mankind shall be induced to believe in the existence of the most elusive of monsters.*

The conversation of an intelligent sailor yields a lively pleasure, and in Mr. Martyr, chief mate, I found a store of salt experience and a large capacity of shrewd observation. The sea-serpent led us to other wonders, and our talk fell upon phosphorescent effects at sea, things counting, in my humble judgment, among the sublimest sights the deep has to offer. I was speaking of a well-known sea-story,† in which the author describes a great space of water as white as milk somewhere north of the Mozambique. The author, quoting Humboldt, says that there is a part of the sea in the Atlantic that is always milky, although very deep, in about 57 degrees of west longitude, and on the parallel of the Island of Dominica.‡ The pale water, he says, is supposed either to move from the shores of Arabia Felix or to arise from sulphureous marine exhalations. The novelist finely describes the sight: "On every side the whole sea lay

* The creature has been variously described; one says, "It was of a dark colour about the head, covered with white spots;" another, "a black body streaked with white;" a third speaks of its tongue "shaped like a harpoon." Lieutenant Bassett, of the U. S. Navy, has collected much amusing information on this and the like subjects in his "Legends and Superstitions of Sailors," 1885.

† "The Green Hand," by George Cupples.

‡ There is preserved a curious paper on this subject by Captain Newland, read in 1772. He speaks of meeting spots of water as white as milk in the passage "from Mocha to Bombay, Surat, etc.," and says that on examining a bucketful he found an innumerable quantity of animalcules floating about alive, "which enlightened that small body of water to an amazing degree. From thence I conclude that the whole mass of water must be filled with this small fish-spawn or animalcules, and that this is without all doubt the reason of the water's appearing so white in the night-time." The patch was about 170 miles long.

spread out smooth and as white as snow—you could not fancy how wide it might stretch away astern on our lee-beam, for not a mark of horizon was to be seen—but all the time the wide face of it was of a dead, ghastly paleness, washing with a swell like milk to our black counter as we forged ahead."

Well, as I have said, I was speaking about these phosphoric effects to Mr. Martyr, when, picking up his note-book, he exclaimed, "It is not long ago since I saw the white water you are talking about, and here is the description of it that I wrote down." So saying, he read out: "Off Bird Island, South Africa, south-west smooth swell, wind south-east, thermometer 73 degrees, temperature of sea-water 67 degrees, wet bulb 71 degrees, dry bulb 74 degrees. The temperature is given so that I may compare it with a like phenomenon should I be spared to witness such a wonderful and awe-inspiring scene again. I had beheld something of the same sort before, but nothing to compare with this. The patch of white was about ten miles long south-east and north-west. Although we were steaming at the rate of thirteen knots you could scarcely hear the noise made by the ship in going through the water either at the bow or at the stern. The appearance of the sea I can only liken to a plain covered with snow, upon which the midday sun is shining brilliantly, the whole viewed through a clear green glass. But the general hue may be better described as resembling the colour of the streak of a sulphur match struck in the dark. The sky was cloudless, yet it appeared as black as if you had come out of a brightly lighted room into a very dark night; though on the horizon, to the height of about five degrees, the heavens were lighted up by the glare of the water. There was sheet lightning, very vivid and incessant.

The picture was one of fearful grandeur, the sea glowing with phosphorus and the sky blotted out in blackness." *

These are matters to kill time with at sea, and than shipboard there is no fitter place for discussing them; as who can tell whilst sailing or steaming along what sight to enchant or to terrify the next hour may not produce? Marine literature would gain very greatly were the masters and mates of the merchant service to take the trouble to make, as Mr. Martyr does, notes of the suprises, the pictures, and the phenomena which the mighty ocean offers. Assuredly not the least entertaining and instructive portions of Piddington's "Sailor's Horn Book" are the extracts he gives from the log-books of intelligent mariners. I noted how useful this practice must prove to a man whilst I chatted with Mr. Martyr, for I could scarcely start a marine topic but that he could tell me something useful and interesting concerning it out of his own experience. We were speaking of gales of wind, the manœuvring of steamers in them, and of a tempest that the *Spartan* encountered during a voyage three or four years ago. Captain Wait told me about it, how he had to heave his ship to, and to batten-down his passengers, and he particularly de-

* "French sailors have a curious legend to account for the phosphorescence of the sea. Satan, they say, constructed a three-masted ship out of wood cut in his domain. This ship smelled of sulphur, and sowed a pest for a hundred leagues around. Satan assembled therein many souls of those who died in a sinful state, which gave him great joy, for when a fresh lot fell into his coppers he laughed extravagantly. This laugh irritated St. Elmo, who, finally enraged by these things, and by the piracies of the vessel's master, pierced the hull by a sudden stroke. The devil, busily engaged in counting a fresh accession to his spoils, was barely able to save himself by swimming. The saint made a tooth-pick of the mast and a handkerchief of the sail. So, when the night is dark and the air warm, the ship burns again, the smell of sulphur is noticed, and the flames mount to the sky."—F. S. Bassett.

scribed one great sea which met amidships just abaft the hurricane-deck, and coiling over in volumes of green water on both sides, filled the quarter-deck; at the same instant the vessel, dipping her stern low, dished a huge mass of water over her taffrail. The rush made a clean sweep of the deck, and a heavy 12-pounder gun lashed to ringbolts just before the wheel was dashed through the skylight and fell with a crash upon the deck below, to the horror and consternation of the battened-down passengers, who must have concluded from such an uproar that the end of the world, rather than the end of the ship, had arrived.

"The heaviest gale," said Mr. Martyr, "that ever I was in; certainly the heaviest gale I have ever encountered north of the Equator, was in January, 1884. We left Plymouth at 3.40 p.m. The barometer was then 29·712 and falling. The wind was north-west, in force about six to seven; the weather cloudy, with passing squalls of heavy rain. At five p.m. the sun sank, heavy crimson, and overclouded. He left the atmosphere clear, as the Lizards were to be seen thirty-five miles distant. At 10·30 the wind backed to south-west. It was then blowing a fresh gale, with high, confused sea. We put the ship at half-speed, so as not to force the water aboard. The squalls came up very heavy, with much rain, and the ship pitched furiously, swinging masses of spray over her fore and aft. At two in the morning the gale was still increasing, with raging squalls and terrific seas. The engines were eased, and the ship put head on. Finding the water tumbling over the stern, we slightly increased the speed of the ship, but to no purpose, so we had to satisfy ourselves by steaming just to keep steerage way upon her. We put double lashing over skylights, hatches, and the like, and nailed them

down to the deck, everything movable on the quarter-deck being either secured or carried away. This cabin of mine was full of water up to that second drawer there. All this went on till about noon of the 27th, when the wind slightly decreased, though the squalls were still of hurricane strength. A few hours later it was blowing only an ordinary gale of wind."

"I suppose you found lying head to it the safest posture?" said I.

"Yes," he replied. "My conviction is that had we brought the sea on the quarter, as recommended by some Atlantic captains, we should have carried away our rudder and been blown under water. Although the ship was very deep and one foot by the head, the only method of preserving her was the one the captain adopted. There cannot be a safer course, I think, in a hurricane than to hold your steamer dead on to the seas, keep steerage way on her, and watch the vessel, as the biggest waves can always be seen at least two seas beyond the one striking the ship."

It is well to have these opinions, for there seems to me to be a good deal of uncertainty in the minds of shipmasters as to the safest posture to place a ship in when a hurricane forces her to heave-to. There can be no rule, perhaps—such rule, I mean, as applies to sailing vessels of all sizes. For what might be a safe position for a steamer four hundred and fifty feet long might prove fatal to a vessel one hundred feet shorter. Some men are for letting their ships take up their own positions; others view with alarm the possibility of their craft falling-off into the trough. Head on, if the ship can be held to that, is probably the securest posture, and certainly the position is one that most diminishes all risk of injury to the rudder. Captain Wait, in speaking

of the behaviour of the *Spartan* during the terrific gale he encountered in the Bay, told me that, with her head dead at it, she climbed the seas as a cat climbs the wall; but this, I am afraid, is not a very common experience, to judge of what I have seen of vessels, which have so smothered themselves in pitching as to leave at moments nothing visible above the foam but the pole-compass and the head of the officer of the watch.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PHANTOM SHIP.

Some of us were in the smoking-room, and the conversation went to Vanderdecken; I thought I would tell them something about the Phantom Ship, and thereupon spun them the following yarn:—

"Some months ago," said I, "I spent an hour at the house of a friend, whom I will speak of as Captain Weevil, and met there a friend of his, Captain Bitt, well known as old Paul Bitt, about the docks that way. Weevil had shipped his Sunday clothes to do the honours of his house, and looked a very smart and hearty old man in his velvet waistcoat, high shirt collar, and black cloth frock coat. Bitt is an old fellow, with little eyes sunk deep in his head, as though driven below their natural bearings by the gales of wind he had peered into, yet they are not so deep as to conceal the good-humour and North-country shrewdness that twinkle in them. He stands about Weevil's height, and has the restlessness of the seaman, incessantly slewing himself

on his chair to look at Weevil or me whilst speaking, occasionally jumping on to his feet, and pacing the little room with the same pendulum step he would employ in walking a quarter-deck. There were no ladies to apologize to for filling our pipes, and we had not been long seated before the room grew dim with tobacco smoke.

"Old Weevil was in the midst of an opinion he was delivering upon the subject of over-insurance, whilst Bitt sat jerkily watching him with his face full of eager and triumphant argument, when we heard a sort of sullen knock on the hall door, and in a moment or two a servant entered, and said, 'Please, sir, Captain Spanker.'

"Weevil started, and I thought looked as if he would tell the servant not to show Spanker in, but if that were his wish, it was too late, for the captain had followed upon the girl's heels, and stood in the doorway as she backed out into the passage. I gazed with surprise at the immensely tall, long-legged, knock-kneed, long-armed, and, I may add, long-haired figure that was in the act of advancing to shake hands with Weevil That he was a nautical man I could scarcely for the moment believe, though I am not amongst those who suppose that the sailor is an unmistakable object for dress and peculiarities. He had a long, gaunt, yellow face, that terminated at the chin in a small bush of wiry grey hair. His eyes were uncommonly large and fine, intensely black, and full of lustre, and the squareness and character of his forehead suggested no small intellectual power. But I do not know that I ever saw a more melancholy face. Parson Adams slightly tipsy, and in a condition of mind bordering upon tearfulness, might convey some idea of what Spanker looked like as he thrust forth one immense leg, and extended his long right-arm, with the

sleeve of his coat ridden high enough to show a thin and very bony wrist, and approached Weevil.

"'Well, Spanker,' exclaimed my friend. 'How are you, Captain? There's a chair. Put your hat down;' and here old Weevil introduced Bitt and myself.

"Spanker saluted us with a melancholy nod, and said in a deep and hollow voice, but with a distinctly cultivated accent, 'I hope I don't intrude, Weevil. I could not guess, of course, that you were entertaining friends. If this climate had the warmth of the golden South, instead of being an atmosphere saturated with damp, every precipitated drop of which is rendered poisonous by a hundred noxious elements, why then people would leave their windows open, and a man by being able to see into his friend's room could judge for himself whether he was likely to prove a trespasser or not.'

"'What will you have, Spanker?' said Weevil, looking at me with a peculiar expression, whilst I gazed with real curiosity at the new-comer's grotesque figure, and his extraordinary features, whose peculiarities took fresh accentuation from his language and articulation.

"'A little brandy,' answered Spanker, in a dismal and depressing voice that vibrated upon the ear like the burr in a Scotchman's speech.

"Bitt looked frightened of him; it was evident that they had not met before; and old Weevil seemed suddenly to think a little explanation necessary.

"'Bitt, Spanker's one of us, I must tell you. Had the old *Doldrum* for five years, likewise the *North Pole*, that was burnt whilst lying off Madras; Spanker saving his life by a miracle.'

"'By a spare-boom,' said Spanker. 'It was a miracle, too, though, and I recollect keeping a shark off for two hours by kicking it.'

"'I knew the ship,' said Bitt, with a glance at Spanker's clothes and legs, as if he couldn't reconcile *them* with the nautical calling.

"'Many more ships, young man, many more ships that I've had command of, might you know,' said Spanker sepulchrally, fixing his glowing eyes upon little Bitt, whilst he loaded a huge meerschaum pipe out of Weevil's tobacco-jar. 'I suppose you are aware, sir,' he continued, 'that it was said of old that those who go down to the sea in ships see many wonders.'

"'Yes,' said Bitt uneasily, 'I have heard the saying.'

"'Is your friend a nautical man, Weevil?' asked Spanker, referring to Bitt.

"'Aye! Pure Stockholm,' responded Weevil laughingly.

"'And this gentleman?' continued Spanker, turning his hatchet-face upon me.

"'They call me a Seafarer,' I responded, struck by the peculiar power and brilliancy of his fine eyes.

"'Ha!' he exclaimed, 'and, pray, what wonders, sir,' addressing Bitt, 'was it your fortune to encounter whilst at sea?'

"'Why,' answered Bitt, 'the only striking wonder I can recall is my coming out of it alive and whole after forty year.'

"'Did you ever see a ghost?' said Spanker, with an impetuosity that made Bitt start.

"'What sort of ghost?' answered Bitt, looking at Weevil as though he would have Spanker restrict his conversation to his friend.

"'What *sort* of ghost!' cried the melancholy man in a voice of mingled pity and scorn, surveying Bitt by beginning at his foot, and sending his burning eyes

travelling up his waistcoat to his hair, 'Why, man, I mean a thing that is visible but impalpable; an apparition that would arrest your footstep, though you could walk through it; an embodiment of passion and sorrow and remorse as thin as the viewless air, yet as substantial as Weevil there.'

"Here Weevil, pulling out an immense pocket-handkerchief, asked me if I didn't find the room rather warm. I am afraid I was too much interested by Spanker to answer him.

"'What sort of a ghost!' continued Spanker, raising his voice and sending a flaming glance at Bitt, 'Why, man, something as dry as the grey ash in your pipe, but as full of misery as living human heart could contain; something you dare not touch with your material fingers lest the afflicted essence should crumble away in powder, yet so real that this pipe isn't solider,' and he brought his meerschaum down with a whack upon the table.

"I could see my friend Weevil growing unhappy. It was evident he knew what was coming. For my part, I was not sorry I sat near the door. Little Bitt, nervously nursing his knee, said, with his pipe between his teeth, 'Singular things, ghosts; but I have no acquaintance with them, and don't want to it.'

"'And pray, sir,' said I, speaking very deferentially, for I protest the man frightened me with his long arms and blazing eyes, 'where may you have seen the particular kind of ghost you refer to, I mean the powdery and afflicted ghost? Not at sea, surely?' I added, venturing a joke, 'for unless the fo'k'sle is very much changed, a nautical ghost need be at no pains to keep himself damp.'

"Weevil looked at me with a woebegone face, as much as to say, 'Now for it.' I had manifestly drawn

the plug, and the contents were bound to flow. Captain Spanker put down his pipe, emptied his glass, smoothed his hair down with his large hands, clasped his fingers tightly upon his somewhat shabby waistcoat, and, fixing his eyes upon the wall directly over Bitt's head, began as follows:—

"'I commanded the old *Doldrum* in 1851; this was the third time that I had had charge of her. We were bound to Bombay with a general cargo. She was a lumping sort of craft, with bows like an apple, wall-sided and flat-bottomed, but a good ship, stiff as a church, and dry as a bloater, though for rolling, Weevil, there never was an old cask that could beat her. She had short top-gallant masts, and a sawed-off-looking stern, with her name, *Doldrum*, in glaring white letters right across it, so that I've seen them sometimes in a dead calm standing in the shadow under the counter like the poet's epitaph—a name writ in water. We were to the westward of the Cape, south of the Trades, and it was summer time in the Southern Hemisphere. Ever since we had lost the Trades, which had proved light winds and promising us a long voyage, we had met with variable breezes, chiefly head-winds and mighty bothersome. I've known the old *Doldrum* do eight knots with a gale of wind on the quarter, but then I kept her under a press of canvas that promised to blow the masts over the bow. That being her best rate you may imagine there was not much to be got out of her on a bowline. I left the deck one evening when a soft air was breathing right over the stern, just enough to give the ship steerage way. We'd got stunsails out on both sides, and the *Doldrum* was quietly rolling in a dreamy sort of way over the long swell that came so unwrinkled to the counter you'd see the reflection of a star widening out

like wire upon the rounded heave of it. Young man,' said Spanker, continuing to speak with his eyes fixed on the wall over Bitt's head, 'you'll have used the sea long enough to know what I mean, when I say that 'twas one of those nights you get on the polar verge of the tropics, when a sort of hush seems to have been sounded throughout the visible creation, when the weak blowing of the draught of air is like the breath of old Ocean regularly following the rising and falling of its breast, when the stars wink drowsily, as though the spirit of the repose was being felt by them, when the ship like a sentient creature nods to the soft cradling movement, while the dark air amongst her rigging, full of sparkles of starlight like constellations of fireflies, is made solemn and mysterious by the tender flapping of the canvas striking with faint, hollow notes down upon the deck, as though, by heavens! Bitt, the air was full of phantoms flapping their invisible wings. Eh man! eh man! isn't it so, isn't it so?' turning his lustrous eyes first upon Weevil, then upon me, and then fixing a look upon little Bitt that appeared to steady that mariner's attention as the uncomfortable anatomy in Coleridge's poem constrained the Wedding Guest.

"The strange, gaunt man continued without waiting for an answer, 'Bitt, when I left the deck it was half-past nine. The chief mate had charge, there was a hand at the wheel, forward all was dark and still. I stood a moment in the companion to watch the rising moon. It stole up out of the sea upon our port-quarter, a mighty crimson globe, as though, Weevil—and this was the fancy it begot—the passions of its inhabitants were direr and deadlier even than those which animate the people of this earth, and the blood-like appearance came of the stainings of a thousand frightful battle-fields.'

"'The moon is not inhabited,' said Bitt mildly.

"Weevil winked at him. Spanker, taking no notice, proceeded: 'But the unholy-looking light of the majestic orb softened into rose, and then into gold, even as I watched. Her sun-coloured sparkling beam delicately flashed up the sea-line all round, and showed an expanse as bare as a desert plain. Mark that, gentlemen. Bare as a desert plain,' he repeated, in his raven note, and sighing deeply. 'I went below, entered my cabin, and lay down. I fell asleep, but woke suddenly with a start of terror, and heard my heart thundering in my ears. I sat up in my cot, and stared around the cabin. Nothing stirred. I listened, but heard naught save the quick hammering of the pulse in my ears. My forehead was bedewed with perspiration, my hands ice-cold and clammy. What could this signify? I could feel the ship swayed by the swell, and the scuttle in my cabin was filmed over with the sheen of the yellow moonshine. I knew that all must be well with the ship. No cry had aroused me. What, then, had caused this sudden leaping up out of sleep that should have been soothed by the deep silence?

"'I dropped out of my cot, and crept up the steps in my socks. I stood, as before, in the companion-way, looking around me. The moon had now soared to the mizzen-topsail yard-arm. The sea all that way was clear, but when I cast my eyes to starboard I saw so strange and wonderful a sight that the mere naming of it to you sets my heart beating violently afresh.' He helped himself to some brandy-and-water whilst we watched him in silence. 'The spectacle, gentlemen,' he continued, with a tremble in his deep-throated voice, 'was a ship built after a pattern rendered familiar to us moderns by Dutch and other paintings of a century

and a half to two centuries ago. 'Twas not that there was not light enough, for the moon was gushing her radiance down upon the thing in a perfect rain of soft gold; it was a sort of vagueness in her, an unsubstantiality that was yet well this side of immateriality, which rendered her elusive to my gaze. I mean there were points in her, features of her construction, that were not determinable by the sight. This much I can tell you. She was painted yellow, if yellow were the dim, churchyard hue that I marked her hull was coated with. She was low in the bows, with a great spring aft, crowned by a kind of double poop, one above another, and what I could see of her stern was almost pear-shaped, supposing the fruit inverted with the stalk sliced off. She had three masts, each with a large protected circular top, resembling turrets; sails of the texture of cobwebs hung from her square yards, and I could see the stars shining through them. I could also see figures watching us or moving along her rail, faint and glimmering shapes, pallid as any dim lustre of phosphorus flashing out from her sickly side as she rolled. There was an indescribable smell in the air as of decayed timber. Pah!' he exclaimed, wiping his mouth with his handkerchief, 'twas the sickliest flavour of decay, such as you sniff on entering an old vault full of coffins mouldering to dust.

"'I ran to the chief mate, who was leaning against the rail, with his arms folded upon his chest and his back to the phantasm. He was sleeping heavily, breathing with a stertorous sound. I shook him violently, but could not waken him. An indescribable fear now possessed me. I strode on trembling knees to the helmsman, but found him in a deep sleep too, erect, but supported by his grip of the spokes. His chin was upon his bosom, and his breathing was like that of one who suffocates.

I would have called to the men forward, but had no voice. Nay, what I dreaded was that I should find them as the mate and the helmsman were. I staggered to the rail, and seizing a belaying pin for support stood looking, incapable of more. Even as I watched I noticed the crawling of little lambent flames upon the sides of the ship, and upon her masts and her yards. They were like the shinings you see in rotten wood, and they made the picture of that ship horrible. Whither had she come? What ghostly wind had blown her to where she was? When I had stepped below, the sea was bare as I told you. There she lay dead abreast of us within easy hailing distance, and some magical power within her enabled her to keep her place, neither passing us nor suffering us to drop her by a fathom, though the light wind still blew, and we with extended stunsails were crawling before it. Presently I noticed a figure remarkable for his stature uprear himself on the taffrail, the boldest point of the hull, where his shape stood out against the moonshine on this side and the low-lying stars beyond. 'Twas evident to me, by his motions and gestures that he was hailing me, but I could hear no sound.' He swung his arms with a movement of entreaty and misery, and presently I beheld another figure approach him, and hand him what I could distinctly perceive to be a speaking-trumpet, but still no sound reached me. The figure left the taffrail and disappeared, and in a minute or two a little boat, lowered apparently from the side of the ship that was hidden from me, stole into the moonlight out of the shadow of the tall stern. The boat slipped along the water, urged by a pair of oars that were soundless as they dipped, and emitted no sparkle, nor stirred the least gleam of phosphorus upon the water. She came close under where I was standing.

There were three men in her, and they turned their faces up to me, and the one who was in the stern-sheets, and who was clearly the shape that had sought to speak with me from the taffrail, stood up. His lips moved, he waved his hands, but either he was voiceless, or the spell that had fallen upon the ship was on me too, and had turned me stone-deaf. Would you have me describe those faces and those men, Captain Bitt? Draw me a nightmare that has wrenched you with agony in your slumbers and I will tell you, man, you lie!—— Your brush or your pencil or your pen is false to the horror, and waking memory cheats you.'

"He emptied his glass and rose from his chair. We instantly got up, too, not knowing what his next move might be, though I suspect that Weevil was influenced by the wish that by his prompt rising he might make Spanker understand he had had enough of him.

"'Weevil,' exclaimed the sad, gaunt man, 'I am a trespasser. Good night.'

"'Not at all,' said Weevil cheerily; 'but, since you will go, why, then good night.'

"Spanker looked hard at me and very forbiddingly at little Bitt.

"'Good night, gentlemen,' said he, giving us a singular bow, and, taking up his hat and stick, he stalked like a tragedy actor out of the room and out of the house.

"'Poor fellow!' I exclaimed.

"'Doocid rum ship that,' said Captain Bitt, with the old merry twinkle coming into his little eyes. 'He didn't tell us her name, though.'

"'I know it,' observed Weevil, with a sigh.

"'What?' asked Bitt.

"'The *Sunstroke*,' said Weevil."

CHAPTER XXV.

HOME!

Ascension is the most chameleon-like island on the face of the waters. It is a slatish haze when you first see it, slowly deepening into delicate blue, as though the dye of the liquid sapphire in which it stands were soaking, as you watched, into its porous conformation; and then the green of the central mountain steals out with many a volcanic peak round about it, beautiful with tints of amber and of rose, of dull emerald, of shadowy brown; until drawing close the island slips from its prismatic hues into a fixity of sedate colours, oppressing the mind with a kind of melancholy, so profound is the isolation, so vast the circle of the deep in the midst of which it lifts its head, so tomb-like the suggestions of the cinderous soil, and the black desolated sea-board cones, which the eye explores in vain for a fragment of weed, for a bare handful of grass.

But it is land, a break in the homeward voyage! and sheer dark lava as it is, pumice, scoriæ, and calcined stones, the gaze greets it gratefully as a brief relief from the eternal junction of heaven and water. We brought up abreast of the little scattering of houses called Georgetown, and scarce was the anchor down when a couple of turtles, like a pair of big circular mahogany tables washing about, came shoving along from seaward to have a look at us. They were husband and wife apparently, and on excellent terms; and we watched them with the complacency of passengers rather aweary of beef and mutton, instructed by their amiable presence

to consider that Ascension was the land of the turtle, and that we might now look for something pleasing in the way of steaks for breakfast, and something novel and nourishing in the way of soup for dinner.

The long foreshore of the island makes you think of the river Tees; you could vow it was formed of slag. And, oddly enough, there is a hint of Margate, too, in the stretch of hard white sand that looks as though there must be bathing machines not far off. The few houses are all of them painted a dark yellow, and make one think of quarantine and the West Coast of Africa. The island suggests the original home of the blast furnace. Its appearance might be most satisfactorily accounted for by declaring that in bygone times a number of Welsh and North of England smelters and blast-furnace people settled here and went on smelting down ore, until, being overwhelmed by the cinders and ashes of their own creation, they took to flight, leaving their chimneys to the mercy of the Atlantic gales. One likes to think of the time when all these cones were ablaze. There are about forty of these natural smoke stacks, heads or orifices of extinct volcanoes, and if they were burning on that Ascension Day, nearly four centuries ago, when Joao de Nova Gallego sighted the rock, the old Portuguese navigator and his mariners must have beheld what Jonathan would call the "tallest sight" the ocean ever offered to the wandering seaman. Think of that mighty scene of incandescence, no matter when the mountains were in flames, the leagues of heaven dyed blood-red, the expanse of ocean crimson with the furious outpouring of fire from those volcanic heights soaring hundreds of feet! If an empty barrel that has held tar will light up the sea for miles, what sort of illumination, one asks, would be shed by forty volcanic peaks all

belching forth at once the scarlet fires of the central earth?

The almost vertical sun poured down its blinding dazzle upon the island, and the heat would have intimidated a native of the Soudan. But British curiosity is a passion, and the same quality that despatched Cook several times round the world, that carried Livingstone into the heart of Africa, that impelled Sir Hugh Willoughby to the Frozen Ocean, that sends little boys to sea, that has given "Albion, the green-hair'd heroine of the West," as Tom Warton called her, possessions wherever the sun shines, drove most of the passengers of the *Spartan* ashore to inspect the turtle-ponds, to collect marine fungi resembling birds' nests, to pocket turtles' eggs as soft as putty, and to lose half the skin off their faces. It was a pure delight to look over the side into the exquisite transparency of the blue there. I could see bottom at eight fathoms, and betwixt the pale gold of it and the cerulean surface there would subtly sneak a score of shapes of sharks, a few hammer-headed, others of the true villainous pattern, with languishing eyes uplifted and murder writ large upon each shovel nose. One beautiful effect I took notice of, such a one as Nathaniel Hawthorne would have loved to commit to his note-book: a cloud hid the sun, and the sea between our ship and the land turned grey; but the loveliness of its own hue the ocean kept faithfully beneath this shadow, as the roses of a sweet face are still on the cheek though a veil be between them and you, and one saw the true tint of the water in the crystal heads of the combers—summits of the daintiest opalescent blue shining out in glass-like clearness as they arched from the shadow that the cloud threw, and stood poised for a breathless instant ere dissolving into foam.

Among the eccentricities of travel place should certainly be found for examples of what passengers consider curiosities. It is impossible to question that a very large proportion of the odd things we buy abroad may be had for half the money in the English manufacturing towns from which they are exported. It is of course disappointing that the silver bangles you bought at Durban as specimens of native fashion and industry should prove pure Brummagem; that your bundle of Zulu assegais should have formed part of a recent consignment from Sheffield, and that the elegant Hindoo necklace that you purchased after much bargaining from a wandering Mussulman, newly arrived at Cape Town from Delhi, should be easily obtainable at any English jeweller's shop, where it is offered as a genuine bit of British manufacture, for many rupees less than you paid the dusky Mahommedan gentleman, who styled himself "fraish from Del-hee, sare." It is disappointing, I say; but still, though you have been cheated, there is something to show; and then, again, there is the colouring and the sentiment that even rubbish will take from distance and travel and the association of far-off places. But what is to be thought of the curiosity-monger who will bring off an old stone from an island sooner than come away empty-handed? A German passenger on board the *Spartan*, finding that there were no curiosities to be purchased at Ascension, filled his pockets with sand, and walking up to me with a handful of it, asked if I did not think it "fonderful?" Another person arrived with several pocket-handkerchiefs loaded with shells distinctly less pleasing and interesting than the like common objects of our English sea-shore, in the quest of which he had ruined a pair of boots, which he told me had cost him two pounds at Port Elizabeth.

"There was a lady," said an old quartermaster, from whom I had caught a grin as the German gentleman with his pockets full of sand walked away, "as bought a little dawg at Madeira, the tiniest, sweetest, most lovable bit of a hanimal as eyer she had set eyes on. She kivered it up in a basket lined with wool, took the oncommonest care of it hup the Bay in cold weather, and got home with it safe and sound. When she reached her home she put the dawg on the carpet for her friends to admire; but the females among 'em instantly gives a screech, a-pulling up their skirts as they does so, and jumping on top of the chairs; for the first thing that there sweetest and most lovable little dawg did was to make for the curtain and run up it, plainly proving that it warn't no dawg at all, but a rat dressed up to look like a sweet and lovable hanimal."

We had not been steaming so long but that the Island of Ascension still lay astern of us broadly defined against the blue heavens, once more full of exquisite colour, the greenish inland mountain throwing out the ambers and purples, the delicate crimsons of the thither peaks and slopes, till in the afternoon glory of the sun the whole pile upon the azure surface there resembled a great nugget of gold with an emerald set in the midst of it, when happening to look forward over the starboard bow I spied the black, wet, gleaming slope of what was indisputably a whale slipping its leviathan form through the swell. Twice it spouted, and the glittering shower fell in a rainbow. It headed right athwart our hawse, and, distance being very difficult to determine at sea, it appeared to me that if it did not mind its eye we should be into it. I scrambled on to the hurricane-deck, whence I should be able to obtain a fuller view than was to be got from the quarter-deck of anything that might happen;

but whether the whale had heard the thunder of our approach, or whether it had respired as much air as it needed, it vanished when we were about four ships'-lengths from it, disappearing at not more than one point on the port-bow. The stem of a steamer of a displacement so great as that of the *Spartan* would, I suppose, at a speed of thirteen miles an hour, cut deep into a whale. That she would drive right through the huge mass I very much doubt. The glimpse one caught of the back of the huge creature furnished a bright idea of the effect of a collision upon a small wooden ship with such a rock-like lump of blubber. I have seen a few whales in my day, but until I spied the fellow that disappeared on our port-bow, and compassed its dimensions by the surface it exposed, and realized the meaning of its bulk as an object to collide with, I confess I had never heard tales of vessels foundering by running into or being run into by whales without very grave misgivings. There is Herman Melville's account of such a disaster; it closes his noble work "The Whaler," and runs thus: "From the ship's bows nearly all the seamen now hung inactive, hammers and bits of plank, lances and harpoons mechanically retained in their hands just as they had darted from their various employments; all their enchanted eyes intent upon the whale which, from side to side strangely vibrating his predestinating head, sent a broad band of overspreading semi-circular foam before him as he rushed. Retribution, swift vengeance, eternal malice were in his whole aspect, and spite of all that mortal man could do, the solid white buttress of his forehead smote the ship's starboard-bow till men and timbers reeled. Some fell flat upon their faces. Like dislodged trucks the heads of the harpooners aloft shook on their bull-like necks. Through

the breach they heard the waters pour as mountain torrents down a flume." The vessel sinks, and all hands save the narrator perish.

I find everything very possible in this description. But we are now in the age of steam and iron, and what George Stephenson said of the locomotive and the cow is to the full as applicable to the steamer and the whale. An example was related to me. A large vessel was steaming at eight knots about fifteen miles distant from Manora Point, when some one shouted out that there was a whale under the bows. There was a slight shock, and the way of the vessel was deadened. Everybody rushed to the side to see what was the matter, and there appeared a portion of the body of a huge whale that, as the vessel pressed forward, turned completely over, exposing the belly. The rent and dying creature in its agony raised such a foaming sea all about it with its thrashing tail that the sight was like the base of a waterspout. Had the propeller been struck by the convulsed mass the ship in all probability would have been disabled. Some years ago a whale drifted ashore on the West Coast of Scotland. It was over a hundred feet long, and when examined the spine was found broken—snapped short across, as it was supposed, by a blow from the stem of an Atlantic steamer.

These are such things as people will talk about during a long voyage, and in our days of amateur seafaring conversation on marine subjects in a mixed company—among whom there will usually be found one man who has been shipwrecked, and at least two men who on several occasions have very narrowly come off with their lives—is not likely to languish from lack of personal experiences. Yet, though it is very agreeable at noon to learn that the steamer has traversed three hundred

and twenty nautical miles in twenty-four hours, it must be admitted that much of the romance of the sea is cut in twain, like the whale in the story by the swift knife-like stem of the flying steamer, and sent floundering and dying to the bottom. 'Tis like travelling on a railway: a picture of beauty flashes upon the sight and is gone ere it is possible to interpret the deep rich poetry of it. The alternations are so rapid you forget to heed them. Every day there are a hundred leagues between where you are and where you were. Yet passengers do not somehow appear to realize this. It is burning hot—call it 115 degrees in the cabins—there is lightning all round, and in the afternoon a heavy storm of hail and rain breaks over the ship. Both old and young ladies—and, for the matter of that, both old and young gentlemen too—exclaim, "Ah! this will cool the air; the temperature will be endurable after this," forgetting that in twenty-four hours they will have rushed from one clime into another, and that the storm that may have tempered the air of a small area in latitude 42 degrees will no more affect the air of latitude 37 degrees, where the ship will have arrived in twenty-four hours, than a house on fire in Whitechapel will influence the indications of a thermometer hung up in Kensington Gardens.

It was different in the old ambling days. A man had time to peer about him then. It was seldom, indeed, that a ship ran a whale down—though when such a thing happened there was scarce limit to the leisure found for studying the character of the damage. I remember once being becalmed in the South Pacific. The ebony swell rolled like oil to the ship's side, swaying her so steadily and gently that the movement of the canvas on high was as soft as the beating of a sea-bird's wings. The moon, of a rusty red, was rising out of a

thickness that lay like a fold of smoke low down upon the horizon. She had no power as yet to touch the sea with light, and the ocean went black to the distorted luminary. It was then that you heard a kind of sighing all about the ship, deep respirations as of giants letting forth their breath in grief. It was no more than the rising of many whales to blow, creatures unseen in the blackness, and by their invisibility rendering that scene of darkness and of calm a wonder and a sort of fear too by the sighing sounds, as though the deep itself were dreaming in its sleep, and whispering as it dreamt.

Such an experience as this must be impossible on board a steamer; the passage of the vessel would have raised a strong breeze of wind, and the magic of the breathless night and its mysterious mammoth voices been extinguished by the roaring notes of parted waters and by the throb and tremble of the engines.

Yet this voyage to South Africa and home, certainly to Table Bay and back, is so full of ocean sweetness and the exhilaration of the deep, so sunlighted, so glad with the kaleidoscopic glories of the fervid parallels, so radiantly blue with miles which seem measureless of tranquil surface that the most passionate lover of the sea could find nothing to complain of in pictures missed or in revelations too swift for enjoyment. From Ascension to far north of Madeira our passage was like yachting on the smooth breast of the English Channel on a summer day. Noon after noon would arrive, showing us the steady average run of from three hundred and ten to three hundred and twenty miles, and every morning when we came on deck the same spectacle of serenity lay before us, the sea of an inexpressible blue, a gentle swell lifting in silk-like folds from the north-west, a soft breeze blowing warm over the bows out of the light azure in the

north and east, followed on by evenings magnificent with sunset, and nights full of stars floating in places in their myriads like sheets of silver, with a steadfast rising of glittering luminaries and constellations dear to the northern eye. It is, indeed, of all voyages, the one to furnish the best delights the sea has to offer in climate, in calmness of waters, in refreshment of wind, in tempered purity of sunshine. There is only the Bay of Biscay to excite misgiving, and let the nervous and the sea-sick reassure themselves by reflecting that in these times of thrashing engines the giant fabric that nothing short of a hurricane can arrest is sent seething from Finisterre to Ushant in a handful of hours.

Speaking for myself, I protest I was not a little grateful for this consideration when we were fairly in the bay, for a gale of wind had been reserved for us, and we got the full weight of it before Finisterre was abeam.

We had indeed noticed symptoms of heavy weather off St. Vincent by the increasing strength of the swell running from the westwards; though whether this most uncomfortable agitation was to be accepted as the precursor of wind or as the lingerings of a disturbance happily passed we could not imagine, until, as I have said, the storm-fiend sprung upon us in the bay. Everybody who has been to sea in a steamer knows what to be rolled about is like, and there were moments when our tumblefication was fit to put a nightmare into the slumber of an angel. "It's always like this at dinner-time!" yelled the head-steward to me, as half the furniture of the dinner-tables tumbled away in an awful clattering, made more hideous yet by masses of spoons and forks launching themselves in volleys into an immense basket lined with tin; "It's all the man at the wheel's doing. He's relieved at six o'clock, and the

chap who follows him lets her fall-off or come-to, and here's the consequence!" and he cast a distracted eye upon the saloon floor, where six or eight waiters were crawling about on their hands and feet, picking up fruit, salt-cellars, cruet-stands, playful napkin-rings, fragments of tumblers, and so forth.

But I am afraid it was not the man at the wheel. It was the sea. Nobody slept that night for having to hold on in bed. I lay in my bunk watching a long succession of contests of speed between a portmanteau and a chair. In the space outside, a table broke away, danced into a married couple's berth, sweeping through the curtain to the consternation of the inmates, pirouetted out again, waltzed into the adjacent cabin, also occupied by a married couple, tumbled headlong over the coaming, rolled to where I had put my shoes to be cleaned in the morning, got mixed up with them somehow, and literally bolted with them into the saloon. Never in all the days of table-turning did any table exhibit such absurd spirits or behave with more impropriety. Some of the passengers fell out of their fore-and-aft bunks so repeatedly that they gave up the job of holding on, and put their mattresses down on the deck. But this did not help them very much, for the heel of the ship was often so great that they would roll from one side of the cabin to the other like casks. Eating became a fine art. By the utmost skill only could a mouthful be had, for the instant the waiter put a plate of food before you it would either discharge its contents over the side of the fiddle into the middle of the table, or airily skim abreast of the neighbour on your left, who had no time to catch it before it had mingled its contents with those of the plate firmly grasped by the neighbour on your right. The seas came along to the ship in processions of cliffs. We were very

light, and from the rail of the quarter-deck we showed a side of, I dare say, twenty-three feet; yet when the steamer rolled to windward the oncoming surge looked to rear its foaming head to high above the hurricane-deck, and it was with a positive emotion of wonder that you marked the sweep of the ship up the thunderous liquid acclivity; and not until she hung a moment on a level keel upon the summit of the great billow could you realize that she had hoisted her vast bulk clear of the threat of the arching, glittering, green crest which you were just now staring up at.

In the very thick of this weather, a steamer bound South passed us. It blew so hard that a man could not look to windward for a few moments without turning his back. The vessel was probably of one thousand five hundred tons register; she had no bulwarks, and the seas tumbled over and off her in such prodigious heaps of foam that, but for her funnel and spars, you would have taken her to be the head of a rock rather than a buoyant ship. Buoyant do I call her? I don't think buoyancy ever tumbled about as she did. Had her hatchway been open when she rolled her deck to us you would have seen her kelson, or whatever takes the place of that fitting in the ocean tramp; and when she heeled over to windward you watched to see her keel rise clear of the smother. It gave one an idea of the power and volume of that sea to make the steamer's disappearance in the trough, and the wild delivery of the whole fabric of her to the flying thickness overhead when the billow hove her up as though Daddy Neptune's trident had speared her bilge, and the weedy old god was forking her on high that the spirit of the gale might inspect the sort of ship Jack is nowadays sent to fight the elements in. She vanished in a haze of spume, and I turned my eyes

from the direction in which she had disappeared, wishing from the bottom of my soul that the men who send such structures as she, so loaded, to sea were compelled by law to sail in them.

On a dark and melancholy March morning we rolled over the leaden seas of the Channel, and, under a smoke-like sky, from which every trace of the sun seemed to have been swept away by the rain, into Plymouth Sound, and dropped anchor in the quiet depths past the breakwater. All was shrouded in the drizzle that the strength of the wind was blowing in horizontal lines. Scarce a glimpse could be had of Plymouth. The Hoe and Mount Edgcumbe and Drake's Island were mere shadows looming sullen in a slatish shadow amid the steamy thickness. There was a perpetual flashing of foam over the breakwater, with long saliva-like drainings of froth cascading down the slope into the sheltered surface, and the contrast of this line of throbbing and leaping snow with the misty green ocean beyond, weltering to the livid gloom that lay upon the horizon, gave the outlook there a most formidable aspect of storminess The *Minotaur*, a huge ship of war lifting an amazing complication of spars and yards on high, rode with a ponderous stillness close to us. Some life was given to the sombre, oppressive picture by the towing out of a ship that, as she swept clear of the breakwater, bowed the seas heavily, flinging the foam from her stem half-way to the tug, and reeling wet and grey upon the tumble with clattering ropes and a dreary shrieking of wind in her rigging. From time to time the roar of heavy pieces discharged from a couple of torpedo-boats, or vessels of that pattern, swung with a crash to the ear upon the wind; but the most of us on board the *Spartan* seemed capable of heeding nothing but the cold and the gloom. I watched a Port Elizabeth

man looking around him for the sun over a shawl that swathed his face to half-way up his nose, and from mouth to mouth there went all sorts of scornful remarks concerning the English climate, the particular attractions it offered to people with delicate chests, its usefulness as a stimulant for rheumatic agony, and its general elegance as a home embellishment wherewith to delight the eyes of people who had not viewed their native land for years.

When the tender arrived to convey mails and passengers ashore there was a rush for her, but it was reported to her master that a child on board during the voyage had suffered from chicken-pox, whereupon he said that he would have to go and fetch the medical officer of health, and off he started, leaving us practically quarantined. It was unquestionably the duty of the doctor to have come off in the first instance. Why he did not choose to do so I cannot imagine; but his inaction resulted in a large number of impatient people, who had been three weeks at sea, and who were clamorously eager to put their foot upon solid earth, losing a convenient train, and suffering a detention of about two hours. But that was not all. The steamer herself was delayed at a time of day and in weather when an hour or two might make all the difference between her reaching Southampton early in the evening or washing about the Channel all night. There might also be a day's expenses added to the cost of the passage to the ship in the shape of meals for the passengers, coals, crew's wages, and so forth. And all because an infant had had a mild attack of chicken-pox, from which it was now recovered, and because the medical officer of health did not choose to come off at once in the tender and so facilitate the disembarkation of the passengers and

expedite the sailing of the ship to her final port. This is a matter I would earnestly direct attention to. Let the authorities quarantine a ship for a mild attack of chicken-pox if they will, but let them, in the name of mercy, of wet weather, and sea-sickness, provide that their medical officer shall immediately attend a vessel on her arrival, and spare people the uncomfortable suspense in which they must remain plunged until the master of the tender puts back to hunt for him and bring him off.

In Plymouth Sound, with the anchor of the *Spartan* down, I would fain stop, but the ocean had not had enough of me yet, and there still remains for me to briefly describe one of the ugliest and most uncomfortable nights I ever passed in my life ashore or afloat. There was a storm of wind blowing from the southward, with a touch of west in it, and as heavy a sea as I can remember in the Channel was running. We steamed out of the Sound into the full weight of it, and when we brought the billows upon our starboard quarter the drunken behaviour of our ship made one wonder at the comparative sobriety of her conduct in the higher seas yet of the Bay of Biscay. The master of a vessel that had been wrecked, a passenger from South Africa, came rushing up to me where I was taking shelter in the ladies' saloon. "By thunder," he cried, "she was pooped deliciously then! man, she was pooped nobly! took it right over the quarter most handsomely!" and, to be sure, I had only to put my head out to see that he spoke the truth. No harm resulted from the flooding, nor was it a thing that could have been averted. The engines had been eased down, the throbbing below was as laboured and slow as the action of a failing pulse. The rain and haze stood in a wall of grey thickness all around us. 'Twas impossible to see ten ships'-lengths, and already the

evening was drawing down, putting a shadow into the air that promised an impenetrable blackness when the twilight had fairly died.

If ever I had lacked appreciation of the duties and responsibilities of the shipmaster, I should have learnt how to sympathize now. For the two previous nights Captain Wait had scarcely left the deck, and here was he again confronted with at least twelve hours of midnight gloom blackening probably the most dangerous bit of navigation in the world, with a gale of wind blowing filled with squalls that drove into the ship at times with cyclonic force, and a sea running of exceptional weight and savageness. I asked the officer if there was any prospect of our making Southampton Water that night? "No prospect whatever," he replied. In short, we were booked to pass the whole night in the Channel hove to. I could not but admire and applaud the seamanlike care and the determined patience of the captain—such care and such patience as I had weeks before recognized in him when he was groping his way along the perilous shore between Mossel Bay and the Cape of Good Hope in a fog as thick, if not as dark, as ever shrouded the streets of London. But I need not disguise the uneasiness I felt. I was sitting in the smoking-room at about eight o'clock in the evening; the ship was making heavy weather of it indeed; her engines were faintly stirring, barely yielding command to the helm. Outside it was as black as a coal-mine. A quartermaster entered to pull down the blinds, that the sheen on the smoking-room windows which looked forward might not bother the man stationed on the forecastle. I asked him if there was anything in sight.

"Yes, sir," he replied in a subdued voice, "there are the lights of several steamers ahead and around us."

I stepped out, and, looking seawards through the wet gale, could just discern the red, feeble twinkling of a steamer's port-light rising upon the send of an invisible billow. It is a common saying that medical men make the worst patients, and it was perhaps reasonable that I, who had written and thought much of collision, should feel anxieties keener than the apprehensions experienced by my fellow-passengers. It is not that a man has the least doubt of the faithful vigilance of the commander and his officers stationed upon the bridge or forward; it is that he fears the absence of that quality in those in charge of the vessels about him. The brightest look-out, the nimblest manœuvring will not save your steamer from collision with a ship where the look-out is bad and the navigation reckless. Hour after hour this went on, the gale sweeping through the masts of the ship with the ring and fury, and with something of the icy edge too, of what used to be called a "Cape Horner;" the steamer plunging and rolling furiously upon the boiling summits, and in the midnight hollows of a genuinely angry and conflicting Channel sea; the engines sometimes slowly moving, sometimes coming to a dead stand; the pouring sounds of wind and washing waters often startlingly broken in upon by the yelling of the steam-horn, that sounded like a human note full of baffled yearning uttered by the labouring fabric out of her own sentience.

I turned in very late, and when I woke next morning it was about seven o'clock. I asked the bedroom steward where we were, and his consoling answer was, "Nobody knows, sir!" There was nothing to be seen through the port-hole but the rinsings of water flung green against the glass; so I went on deck, and there, sure enough, all around us lay the same grey thickness that

had smothered us up on the previous afternoon, with the wind still blowing a gale and the surges rolling as they had rolled all night. But whilst we were at breakfast, the engines being motionless and the ship reeling to sickening angles at moments, a beam of sunshine shot through the skylight. A few minutes after the engine-room bell rang out its clear notes and the propeller went ahead at full speed.

"Just tumbled across a pilot, and he's on the bridge!" sang out the cheery voice of the second officer.

"Ha! then it's all right now," exclaimed a corpulent passenger who discovered several marks on his face and hands of having tumbled about a great deal during the night. "Waiter, another chop, if you please."

Yes, it was all right now, with the clouds breaking into blue rifts and the sunshine flashing through the windy openings, and the pilot at the right hand of the anxious, sleepless captain who had held to his bitter post throughout the night.

"Wasn't there a talk of abolishing compulsory pilotage?" exclaimed a gentleman to me.

I nodded.

"Humph!" he grumbled, frowning as he stared landwards, where the shadow of the Isle of Wight was now visible. "I wish to thunder that those inland folks who make the nautical life their Parliamentary hobby would go to sea and find out the truth for themselves before venturing to imperil life and crush down the ship-master with a burden of obligations heavier than he or any mortal could bear."

The morning grew fairer, the sunlight steady, the gale fined down into a shrill and piping wind, the eastern extremity of the Isle of Wight stood out clear and bold.

In a short time our keel was in the comparatively smooth water of Spithead, and by the time the town clocks of Southampton were striking eleven the *Spartan* was safely moored alongside the quay and her passengers had bidden one another a cordial farewell.

THE END.

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